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SIKHISM

ITS IDEALS AND INSTITUTIONS

BY

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PREFACE

This is a collection of essays written occasionally on the different essential features of Sikhism. I have tried to connect them by adding or omitting passages, but there may still appear some repetition of facts which was found necessary to make each chapter full and self-contained.

I have tried to present Sikhism in its idealistic as well as practical aspects, and in so doing I have relied on the original teaching of the founders of Sikhism and on the tradition preserved in history and actual practice. In writing the chapter on the Sikh ritual I have freely drawn upon the latest formularies in vogue.

I have sought to make it as authentic and as little controversial as possible; still there may be points where difficulties will be felt. Most of these difficulties will be obviated if we remember that we are not dealing with a relic of the past but a living force which, while preserving its ideals as its true core, has been adapting its institutions to the changing circumstances, as may be seen in the case of the *Gurmatta*. The modern times are challenging all faiths and their institutions to justify themselves by practical utility, and Sikhism is no exception to the rule. It must also lay its cards on the table, and

explain its mysteries in the terms of the workaday world. The attempt to do so, especially when it is the first of its kind, is likely to be taken by the faithful as a profanation of the mystery, and by the curious as smacking something of the old sort of jugglery. Only familiarity with the subject can remove this difficulty. I hope this book provides sufficient material to cultivate this familiarity.

TEJA SINGH.

January, 1938.

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S I K H I S M
ITS IDEALS AND INSTITUTIONS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Japji, or the Meditations of Guru Nanak
Asa-di-Var, or Morning Hymns of Guru Nanak
Sukhmani, or the Psalm of Peace of Guru Arjun
Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism
Highroads of Sikh History, Parts I, II & III

CHAPTER I

LOVE OF THE NAME

The aim of life, according to the Sikh Gurus, is not to attain salvation or a heavenly abode called Paradise, but to develop the best in us which is God.

“If a man loves to see God, what cares he for Salvation or Paradise!” (Guru Nanak’s *Asa*).

“Everybody hankers after Salvation, Paradise, or Elysium, setting their hopes on them everyday of their lives. But those who love to see God do not ask for salvation: The sight itself satisfies their minds completely” (Guru Ram Das in *Kalyan*).

How to see God and to love Him? The question is taken up by Guru Nanak in his *Japji*:

“What shall we offer to Him that we may behold His council-chamber?

What shall we utter with our lips, which may move Him to give us His love?—

In the ambrosial hours of the morn meditate on the grace of the True Name;

For, your good actions may procure for you a better birth, but emancipation is from Grace alone.”

“We should worship the Name, believe in the Name, which is ever and ever the same and true” (*Sri Rag* of Guru Nanak).

The practice of the Name is emphasised again and again in the Sikh Scriptures, and requires a little explanation.

THE NATURE OF GOD OR THE NAME

God is described both as *nirgun*, or absolute, and *sagun*, or personal. Before there was any creation God lived absolutely in Himself, but when He thought of making Himself manifest in creation He became related. In the former case, ‘when God was Himself self-created, there was none else; He took counsel and advice with Himself; what He did came to pass. Then there was no heaven, or hell, or the three-regioned world. There was only the Formless One Himself; creation was not then’ (*Gujri-ki-Var* of Guru Amar Das). There was then no sin, no virtue, no Veda or any other religious book, no caste, no sex (Guru Nanak’s *Maru Solhe*, xv, and Guru Arjun’s *Sukhmani*, xxi). When God became *sagun* or manifest, He became what is called the *Name*, and in order to realize Himself He made Nature wherein He has His seat and ‘is diffused everywhere and in all directions in the form of Love’ (Guru Gobind Singh’s *Jāp*, 80).

In presenting this double phase of the Supreme Being, the Gurus have avoided the pitfalls into which some people have fallen. With them God is not an abstract idea or a moral force, but a personal Being capable of being loved and honoured, and yet He is conceived of as a Being whose presence is diffused all over His creation. He is the common Father of all, fashioning worlds and supporting them from inside, but He does not take birth. He has no incarnations. He Himself stands for the creative agencies, like the *Maya*, the Word and Brahma; He Himself is Truth, Beauty and the eternal yearning of the heart after Goodness (*Japji*, xxi). In a word, the Gurus have combined the Aryan idea of immanence with the Semitic idea of transcendence, without taking away anything from the unity and the personal character of God.

“O give me, give some intelligence of my Beloved.

I am bewildered at the different accounts I have of Him.

O happy wives, my companions, say something of Him.

Some say that He is altogether outside the world;

Others that He is altogether contained in it.

His colour is not seen; His features cannot be made out;

O happy wives, tell me truly—”

“He lives in everything; He dwells in every heart;

Yet He is not blended with anything; He is separate.”*

“Why dost thou go to the forest in search of God?

He lives in all, is yet ever distinct; He abides with thee too.

As fragrance dwells in a flower, or reflection in a mirror,

So does God dwell inside everything; seek Him therefore in the heart.”†

People who begin to study Sikhism with preconceived notions often blunder in offering its interpretations. Those who are conversant with Eastern thought fasten upon those passages which refer to the thoughts of immanence and conclude that Sikhism is nothing but an echo of Hinduism, while those who are imbued with Mohammedan or Christian thought take hold of transcendental passages and identify Sikhism with Islam or Christianity. Others who know both will see here no system, nothing particular, nothing but confusion.

If, however, we were to study Sikhism as a new organic growth evolved from the existing systems of thought to meet the needs of a newly

**Jaisri* of Guru Arjun.

†*Dhanasri* of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

evolving humanity, we should find no difficulty in recognizing Sikhism as a distinct system of thought.

Take, for instance, Guru Nanak's *Asa-di-Var*, which in its preliminary stanzas lays down the fundamentals of Sikh belief about God. It is a trenchant clear-cut monotheism. God is called 'the indweller of Nature,' and is described as filling all things 'by an art that is artless' (xii. 1-2). He is not an impotent mechanic fashioning pre-existing matter into the universe. He does not exclude matter, but includes and transcends it. The universe, too, is not an illusion. Being rooted in God who is real, it is a reality; not a reality final and abiding, but a reality on account of God's presence in it (ii.1). His Will is above Nature as well as working within it, and in spite of its immanence it acts not as an arbitrary force but as a personal presence working most intelligently (iii.2). The first thing about God is that He is indivisibly one, above every other being, however highly conceived, such as Vishnu, Brahma, or Shiva (i), or as Rama and Krishna (iv.2). The second thing is that He is the highest moral being (ii.2), who has inscribed all men with His Name or moral presence (ii). He is not a God belonging to any particular people, Muslim or Hindu, but is 'the dispenser of life universal' (vi). The ways to realize Him are not many, but only one (xii.3), and that way is

not knowledge, formalism (xiv.2, xv.1-4), or what are received as meritorious actions which establish a claim to reward (viii.2), but love (xiii.2) and faith (xiv.2), the aim being to obtain the grace of God (iv.2, v.2, viii.2, xiii.1). The only way of worshipping Him is to sing His praises (vi.1, vii, ix, xii.2, xix.2, xxii.3) and to meditate on His Name* (ii, viii.1, ix.2, xvi.1).

This life of praise is not to be one of idle mysticism, but of active service done in the midst of worldly relations. "There can be no worship without good actions."† These actions, however, are not to be formal deeds of so-called merit, but should be inspired by an intense desire to please God and to serve fellow-men.

"Without pleasing God all actions are worthless.

Repetition of mantras, austerities, set ways of living, or deeds of merit leave us destitute even before our journey ends.

You won't get even half a copper for your fasts and special programmes of life.

*'Name' is a term, like *logos* in Greek, bearing various meanings. Sometimes it is used for God Himself, as in *Sukhmani*, xvi.5: 'The Name sustains the animal life; the Name supports the parts and the whole of the universe.' It is described as being 'immortal,' 'immaculate,' 'indweller of all creation,' and is to be sung, uttered, thought upon, served and worshipped. In most cases it means the revelation of God as found in the sacred Word.

† *Japji*, xxi.

These things, O brother, won't do there; for, the requirements of that way are quite different.

You won't get a place there for all your bathing and wandering in different places.

These means are useless: they cannot satisfy the conditions of that world.

Are you a reciter of all the four Vedas? There is no room for you there.

With all your correct reading, if you don't understand one thing that matters, you only bother yourself.

I say, Nanak, if you *exert* yourself in action, you will be saved.

Serve your God and remember Him, leaving all your pride of self.' '*

CHAPTER II

UPLIFT OF MAN BASED ON CHARACTER

The Gurus laid the foundation of man's uplift, not on such short-cuts as mantras, miracles* or mysteries but on man's own humanity, his own character; as it is character alone—the character already formed—which helps us in moral crises. Life is like a cavalry march. A cavalry officer on the march has to decide very quickly when to turn his men to the right or left. He cannot wait until they are actually on the brink of a *nulla* or *khud*. He must decide long before that. In the same way, when face to face with an evil, we have to decide quickly. Temptations allow us no time to think. They always come suddenly. When offered a bribe or an insult, we have to decide at once what course of action we are going to adopt. We cannot then consult a religious book or a moral guide. We must decide on the impulse. And this can be done only if virtue has so entered into our disposition that we are habitually drawn towards it, and evil has no attraction for us. Without

*'The desire to possess miraculous powers is a false attachment; it keeps out the love of the Name from the heart'—*Var Vadhans*, III. Guru Gobind Singh in his *Vichitra Natak* says that his father preferred death to performing a miracle which according to him was 'an act of jugglery or make-belief of which any man of God would be ashamed.'

possessing sufficient virtue in their character, some even of the so-called great men have been known to fall an easy prey to temptation. It was for this reason that the Gurus did not think it sufficient to lay down in a book rules of conduct for the formation of character; they also thought it necessary to take in hand a whole people for a continuous course of training in wisdom and experience, spread over many generations, before they could be sure that the people so trained had acquired a character of their own. This is the reason why in Sikhism there have been ten founders, instead of only one.

Before the Sikh Gurus, the leaders of thought had fixed certain grades of salvation according to the different capacities of men, whom they divided into high and low castes. The development of character resulting from this was one-sided. Certain people, belonging to the favoured classes, developed in themselves a few good qualities to a very high degree, while others left to themselves became degenerate. It was as if a gardener, neglecting to look after all the different kinds of plants entrusted to him, were to bestow all his care on a few chosen ones, which were in bloom, so that he might be able to supply a few flowers everyday for his master's table. The Gurus did not want to have such a lop-sided growth. They wanted to give oppor-

tunities for the highest development to all classes of people.

“There are lowest men among the low castes.

Nanak, I shall go with them. What have I got to do with the great?

God’s eye of mercy falls on those who take care of the lowly.”

“It is mere nonsense to observe caste and to feel proud over grand names.”*

Some work had already been done in this line. The Bhagats or reformers in the Middle Ages had tried to abolish the distinction between high-class Hindus and the so-called untouchables, by taking into their fold such men as barbers, weavers, shoemakers, etc. But the stigma of untouchability still remained, because the privilege of equality was not extended to men as men, but to those individuals only who had washed away their untouchability with the love of God. Kabir, a weaver, and Ravidas, a shoemaker, were honoured by kings and high-caste men, but the same privilege was not extended to other weavers and shoemakers, who were still held to be untouchables. Ravidas took pride in the fact that the love for God had so lifted him out of his caste that even “the superior sort of

**Sri Rag* of Guru Nanak. See also Guru Arjun’s *Jaisri-ki-Var*, vii, and Guru Amar Das’s *Bhairo, Chaupadā*, i.

Brahmins came to bow before him," while other members of his caste, who were working as shoe-makers in the suburbs of Benares, were not so honoured.*

The Sikh Gurus made this improvement on the previous idea that they declared the whole humanity to be one, and that a man was to be honoured, not because he belonged to this or that caste or creed, but because he was a man, an emanation from God, whom God had given the same senses and the same soul as to other men:—

"Recognize all human nature as one."

"All men are the same, although they appear different under different influences.

The bright and the dark, the ugly and the beautiful, the Hindus and the Muslims, have developed themselves according to the fashions of different countries.

All have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body and the same build—a compound of the same four elements."†

Such teaching could not tolerate any ideas of caste or untouchability. Man rose in the estimation of man. Even those who had been considering themselves as the dregs of society, and who for generations had lived as grovelling slaves

*Ravidas in *Rag Malar*.

†Guru Gobind Singh's *Akal Ustat*, 86.

of the so-called higher classes, became fired with a new hope and courage to lift themselves and to be the equals of the best of humanity.

Women too received their due. "How can they be called inferior," says Guru Nanak, "when they give birth to the greatest men?" Women as well as men share in the grace of God and are equally responsible for their actions to Him.* Guru Hargobind called woman "the conscience of man." Sati was condemned by the Sikh Gurus long before any notice was taken of it by Akbar.†

The spirit of man was raised with a belief that he was not a helpless creature in the hands of a Being of arbitrary will, but was a responsible being endowed with a will of his own, with which he could do much to mould his own destiny. Man does not start life with a blank character. He has already existed before he is born. He inherits his own past as well that of his family and race. All this goes to the making of his being and has a share in the moulding of his nature. But this is not all. He is given a will with which he can modify the inherited and acquired tendencies of his past and determine his coming conduct. If this were not so, he would not be responsible for his actions. This

**Asa-di-Var*, xix.

†See Guru Amar Das's *Var Suhi*, vi.

will, again, is not left helpless or isolated; but if through the Guru's Word it be attuned to the Supreme Will, it acquires a force with which he can transcend all his past and acquire a new character.

This question of human will as related to the Divine Will is an intricate one and requires a little elucidation.

According to Sikhism, the ultimate source of all that is in us is God alone. Without Him there is no strength in us. Nobody, not even an evil man, can say that he can do anything independent of God. Everything moves within the Providential domain.

“Thou art a river in which all beings move;
There is none but Thee around them.

All living things are playing within Thee.”*

A fish may swim against the current of a river or along with it, just as it likes, but it cannot escape the river itself. Similarly man may run counter to what is received as good or moral, but he can never escape from the pale of God's Will.†

Then who is responsible for his actions? Man himself. We learn from the first *sloka* of *Asa-di-Var's* 7th *pauri* that man is given free will, which leads him to do good or evil actions, to

*Guru Ram Das in *Asa*.

†*Japji*, ii.

think good or evil thoughts, and to go in consequence to heaven or hell.

“Governed by his free will he laughs or weeps;

Of his free will he begrimes or washes himself;

Of his free will he degrades himself from the order of human beings;

Of his free will he befools himself or becomes wise.”

In the next *sloka* we read:

“Self-assertion gives man his individuality and leads him to action:

It also ties him down to the world and sends him on a round of births and deaths.

Wherefrom comes this assertion of self? How shall it leave us?

It comes to man from the Will of God and determines his conduct according to his antecedents.

It is a great disease; but its remedy also lies within itself.

When God sends grace to man, he begins to obey the call of the Guru.

Nanak says: Hear ye all, this is the way to cure the disease.”

The source of evil is not Satan, Ahrman, or any other external agency. It is our own sense of Ego placed by God in us. It may

prove a boon or a curse to us, according as we subject ourselves to God's Will or not. It is the overweening sense of self that grows as a barrier between God and man and keeps him wandering from sin to sin.—

“The bride and the bridegroom live together, with a partition of Ego between them.”*

The Infinite is within us, ‘engraved in our being,’ like a cypher which is gradually unfolding its meaning as we listen to the voice of the Teacher. It is like the light of the sun ever present, but shut out of our sight by the cloud of ignorance and selfishness. We sin as long as this light remains unmanifested and we believe in our self as everything to us.

Regeneration comes when, at the call of Grace, we begin to subject our tiny self to the highest Self, that is God, and our own will is gradually attuned to His Supreme Will, until we feel and move just as He wishes us to feel and move.

Really the problem of good and evil is the problem of Union and Disunion† with God. ‘All things are strung on God's Will,’ and man among them. As long as man is conscious of this, he lives and moves in union with Him. But gradually led away by the overweening sense of

*Guru Ram Das in *Malar*.

†*Japji*, xxix.

self, he cuts himself off from that unity and begins to wander in moral isolation. It is, however, so designed in the case of man that whenever he wishes he can come back to the bosom of his Father and God and resume his position there. Guru Nanak says in *Maru* :

“By the force of Union we meet God and enjoy Him even with this body;

And by the force of Disunion we break away from Him;

But, Nanak, it is possible to be united again.”

When we come into this world, we begin our life with a certain capital. We inherit our body from our parents, and there are divine things in us, as ‘the spirit and progressive tendencies,’ which serve as forces of union and keep us united with God. There are also evil tendencies in us inherited from our past lives which serve as forces of Disunion and draw us away from Him towards moral death. Cf. Guru Nanak in *Maru* :

“Man earns his body from the union of his mother and father;

And the Creator inscribes his being with the gifts of the spirit and progressive tendencies.

But led away by delusion he forgets himself.”

This teaching about the freedom of will and

‘the progressive tendencies’ raises the spirit of man and gives him a new hope and courage. But that is not enough to enable him to resist evil and to persist in positive virtue. The temptation of evil is so strong and the human powers for resisting it,—in spite of the inherent progressive tendencies,—are so weak that it is practically impossible for him to fulfil that standard of virtue which is expected of him. It was this consciousness of human weakness which made Farid say:

“The Bride is so weak in herself, the Master so stern in His commands.”

That is, man is endowed with such weak faculties that he stumbles at each step, and yet it is expected of him that—

“He should always speak the truth, and never tell lies.”*

“He should beware even of an unconscious sin.”†

“He should not step on the bed of another’s wife even in dream.”§

These commands cannot be fulfilled simply with the strength of knowledge and inherited tendencies. They will not go far even in resisting evil. The higher ideal of leading a life of positive virtue and sacrifice is absolutely im-

*Farid. †Guru Tegh Bahadur.
§Guru Gobind Singh.

possible with such a weak equipment. What then is to be done?

The prophets of the world have given many solutions of this problem. Some get over the difficulty by supposing that there is no evil. It is only a whim or false scare produced by our ignorance. They believe in the efficacy of knowledge. Others believe in the efficacy of austerities; still others in alms given in profusion to overwhelm the enormity of sin. There are, again, a higher kind of teachers who inculcate the love of some great man as a saviour. What was the solution offered by the Sikh Gurus?

They saw that, although it was difficult for a man to resist evil and to do good with his own powers, yet if he were primed with another personality possessing dynamic powers, he could acquire a transcendental capacity for the purpose. This personality was to be the Guru's.

CHAPTER III

THE GURU IN SIKHISM

The way of religion, as shown by Sikhism, is not a set of views or doctrines, but a way of life lived according to a definite *model*. It is based, not on rules or laws, but upon discipleship. The personality of the Guru is at all times operative in the career of the disciple, commanding his whole being and shaping his life to its diviner issues. Without such a personality there would be no cohesion, no direction in the moral forces of society, and in spite of a thousand kinds of knowledge 'there would still be utter darkness.'* There would be no force to connect men with men and them with God.† Everybody would exist for himself in moral disintegration, 'like spurious sesames left desolate in the field' 'with a hundred masters to own them.'† It is the Guru who removes the barriers of caste and position set up by men among themselves, and gathering them all unto himself unites them with God.† In this way are laid the foundations of a society of the purified who as an organized force strive for the good of the whole human race.

**Asa-di-Var*, i.

† "Nanak, the true Guru must be such as to unite all men."—*Sri Rag*, I. "God appoints holy men as witnesses to show that He is not far from us."—*Ramkali, Ruti*, V.6.

Such a creative personality must be perfect, because 'men take after whom they serve.'* If the ideal person is imperfect, the society and its members who follow him will also develop imperfectly. But 'those who serve the saved ones will be saved.'†

The Sikh Gurus were perfect, and are described as such in the Sikh Scriptures. Guru Nanak himself says in *Sri Rag*: "Everybody else is subject to error; only the Guru and God are without error." And Guru Arjun says in *Bhairon*: "Whoever is seen is defective; without any defect is the true Guru, the Yogi." The state of perfection attained by the Gurus is lucidly described in the eighth and the eighteenth cantos of Guru Arjun's *Sukhmani*. The same Guru says in *Asa*:

God does not die, nor do I fear death.
 He does not perish, nor do I grieve.
 He is not poor, nor do I have hunger.
 He has no pain, nor have I any trouble.
 There is no destroyer but God,
 Who is my life and who gives me life.
 He has no bond, nor have I got any.
 He has no entanglement, nor have I any
 care.
 As He is stainless, so am I free from stain.
 As He is happy, so am I always rejoicing.

*Guru Amar Das in *Var Bihagra*.

†*Majh*, III.

He has no anxiety, nor have I any concern.
As He is not defiled, so am I not polluted.
As He has no craving, so do I covet
nothing.

He is pure, and I too match Him in this.
I am nothing: He alone is everything.
All around is the same He.

Nanak, the Guru has destroyed all my
superstition and defects,

And I have become uniformly one with
Him.

The Guru is sinless. In order, however, to be really effective in saving man, he must not be above man's capacity to imitate, as he would be if he were a supernatural being. His humanity must be real and not feigned. He should have a nature subject to the same laws as operate in the ordinary human nature, and should have attained his perfection through the same Grace as is available to all men and through perfect obedience to God's Will. The Sikh Gurus had fought with sin and had overcome it. Some of them had lived for a long time in error, until Grace touched them and they were perfected through a constant discipline of knowledge, love and experience in the association of their Gurus. When they had been completely attuned to the Will divine and were sanctified as Gurus, there remained no defect in them and they became perfect and holy. Thereafter sins did come to

tempt them, but they never gave way and were always able to overcome them. It is only thus that they became perfect exemplars of men and transformed those who came under their influence to veritable angelic beings.

THE GURU IN THE SIKH

This transformation comes not only through close association with the Guru, which is found in many other religions, but through the belief that the Sikh incorporates the Guru. He fills himself with the Guru, and then feels himself linked up with an inexhaustible source of power. A Sikh, a pure-hearted Sikh, who follows the teachings of his Guru, is a great power in himself; but when such a Sikh is infused with the dynamic personality of such a perfect exemplar as Guru Gobind Singh, his powers take on an infinite reach and he becomes a superman. He is called "Khalsa," the personification of the Guru himself. "The Khalsa," says the Guru, "is my other self; in him I live and have my being." A single Sikh, a mere believer, is only one; but the equation changes when he takes Guru Gobind Singh into his embrace. He becomes equal to 'one lakh and a quarter,' in the Sikh parlance. This change takes place not only in his physical fitness, but also in his mental and spiritual outlook. His nature is so reinforced in every way that although hundreds may fall round him, he

will resist to the last and never give way. Wherever he stands, he will stand as 'a garrison of the Lord of Hosts,' a host in himself—a host of one lakh and a quarter. He will keep the Guru's flag always flying.) Whenever tempted, he will ask himself, "Can I lower the flag of Guru Gobind Singh? Can I desert it? I, as Budh Singh or Kahan Singh, can fall; but can Guru Gobind Singh who is in me fall? No, never." This feeling of incorporation with the Guru makes the Sikh strong beyond his ordinary powers, and in times of emergency comes to his rescue long before he can remember anything relevant to the occasion recorded in history or scripture. Bhai Joga Singh is a case in point. He was a devoted Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh, and had received baptism from the hands of the Guru himself. He was so loyal that when he received an urgent call from the Guru to proceed to Anandpur, he hastened from Peshawar without a moment's delay, not waiting even to see his own marriage through. And yet in a moment of weakness, this paragon of Sikh purity was going to fall, and that too at the door of a public woman of Hoshiarpur. Who saved him in that emergency? It was the vision of Guru Gobind Singh, re-establishing the personal contact by pointing out the signs of personation worn on his body, and reminding him that he was carven in the Guru's own image.

THE GURU IN THE PANTH

So far we have considered what the Guru does for the Sikhs as individuals. We have seen how he intensifies their character and increases their power a thousandfold by filling their personalities with his own. In order to increase this power even more so, the Guru made another arrangement. He organized them into *Sangats* or Holy Assemblies, and again put his personality into them. This led to a very remarkable development in the institution of Guruship, and no description of it will be complete without an account of this development.

The Sikh idea of religion, as we have seen, was something more practical than being merely mystic. It was to consist of the practice of *Nam* and *Sewa*. To practise *Nam* means to practise the presence of God by keeping Him ever in our minds by singing His praises or dwelling on His excellences. This is to be done not only when alone in solitude, but also in public, where worship of the Name is made more impressive by being organized in the form of congregational recitations or singing. The other element is *Sewa* or Service. The idea of service is that it should be not only liberal, but also efficient and economical; that is, it should do the greatest good with the least possible means. It should not be wasteful. We do not set up a sledge-

hammer to crack a nut, or send a whole army to collect revenue. We have to be economical in our efforts, however charitable they may be. For this purpose we have to organize our means. In every work of a practical nature, in which more than one person is engaged, it is necessary to have recourse to organization.) As religion too—especially a religion like Sikhism whose aim is to serve mankind—belongs to the same category, it requires organization of its followers as an essential condition of its success. It may not be necessary in the case of an individualistic religion, wherein the highest aim is to empty the mind of all its desires, or to dream away the whole life in jungles or mountains; but where religion consists in realizing God mainly through service done within the world, where men have constantly to deal with men to promote each other's good, it is impossible to do without organization.

Guru Nanak had therefore begun with two things in his religious work: the holy Word and the organized Fellowship.* This organized fellowship is called *Sangat*. The idea of *Sangat* or holy Fellowship led to the establishment of local assemblies led by authorised leaders, called *Masands*. Every Sikh was supposed to be a member of one or other of such organizations. The Guru was the central unifying personality

*Bhai Gurdas, *Vars*, i.42-43.

and, in spite of changes in succession, was held to be one and the same as his predecessors.

In the Coronation Ode, recorded in the Holy Granth, two bards, Satta and Balwand, bear witness to this oneness: "Lehna, the scion of Guru Nanak, exchanged bodies with him and took possession of his throne." "Guru Nanak proclaimed the succession of Lehna as a reward for his service. He had the same light, the same method; the Master merely changed his body." "The wise being, Guru Nanak, descended in the form of Amar Das." "Guru Amar Das obtained the same mark, the same throne and the same court." "Thou, Ram Das, art Nanak; thou art Lehna; thou art Amar Das: so I deem thee." "The human race comes and goes; but thou, O Arjun, art ever new and whole."

Bhai Gurdas, who was the amanuensis of Guru Arjun, and who is accepted as an authority on the interpretation of the Sikh Scriptures, accepts the unity of the six Gurus known to him. See his *Odes*, i. 45-48, iii. 12, xx. 1, xxiv. 5-25, xxvi. 31 and 34.

Mohsin Fani, who wrote in the time of the Seventh Guru, says about the Sikhs in his *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*: "Their belief is that all the Gurus are identical with Nanak."* He also says

*See also *Dabistan*, Vol. II, pp. 253-55.

that the Guru in his letters to him always signed himself as "Nanak."

Guru Gobind Singh in his autobiography, called *Vichitra Natak*, says about his predecessors: "The generality of men take them as different from one another; very few recognize them as one in spirit. But only those realize perfection who do recognize them as one."

Bhai Nand Lal, a great Persian scholar in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, also says the same thing in his *Jot Bikas*.

The love existing between the Guru and the Sikhs was more intense than has ever existed between the most romantic lovers of the world. But homage paid to the Guru was made impersonal by creating a mystic unity between the Sikh and the Guru on the one hand and the Guru and the Word on the other.* Greatest respect began to be paid to the incorporated Word, even the Guru choosing for himself a seat lower than that of the Scriptures. The only form of worship was the meditation on and the sing-

*"The Guru lives within his Sikhs, and is pleased with whatever *they* like."—*Gauri-ki-Var*, IV. "The Guru is Sikh and the Sikh who practises the Guru's word is at one with the Guru."—*Asa Chhant*, IV. See also Bhai Gurdas, *Vars*, iii.11 and ix.16. "The Word is Guru, deep and full of wisdom."—*Sorath*, I. "The Guru is the Word, and the Word is Guru."—*Kanra*, IV.

ing of the Word.* The Sikh assemblies also acquired great sanctity, owing to the belief that the spirit of the Guru lived and moved among them. They began to assume higher and higher authority; until collectively the whole body, called the *Panth*, came to be regarded as an embodiment of the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh himself received baptism from the Sikhs initiated by himself. After him the Sikhs ceased to have any personal Guru. If we read Sikh history aright, the Sikh community would appear as an organized unit, to have undergone a course of discipline in the hands of ten Gurus, until its character was fully developed and the Guru merged his personality in the body of the nation thus reared.† The Guru as mentioned above, worked with two things: the personal association and the Word. Now after the death of Guru Gobind Singh the personality and the Word were separated. The *Panth* was invested with the personality of the Guru, and the incorporated Word became the *Gyan* Guru. That is, in simple

* *Asa-di-Var*, vi.1. "In this world the best practice is of the Word."—*Parbhati*, I. "My yoga is practised by singing Thy hymns."—*Asa*, V. Sujan Rai of Batala writing about Sikhs in 1697 says in his *Khulasatul-Twarikh*: "The only way of worship with them is that they read the hymns composed by their Gurus and sing them sweetly in accompaniment with musical instruments." In the Golden Temple, Amritsar, up to this time, nothing but continuous singing of hymns day and night by relays of singers is allowed.

† See the author's *Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism*.

words, the Khalsa Panth was to be the Guru in future, not in supersession of the previous Gurus, but as authorised to work in their name; and it was invariably to guide itself by the teachings of the Gurus as found in the Holy Granth. So that the Sikhs came to name Guru Nanak and the Guru Panth in the same breath.

This double phase of the Guruship solves one of the most difficult problems of modern religion. Each faith has its own founder who is held to be the last and the most perfect of the prophets, and whose authority is accepted as absolute and final for all times. This was considered all right for the times when people believed that the past was better than the present or the future and that man had been degenerating in his capacity to know or to interpret the truth. But now that a better and more optimistic view is taken of man and he is believed to be progressively advancing in the knowledge of truth, beauty and goodness, it is difficult to persuade the modern man to ignore all the advance made in the evolution of intellect, feeling and moral sense during the past centuries and to guide himself in every detail by the doings of a static personality that existed away in the past. There can be no world without traditions; neither can there be any life without movement. It is therefore necessary that as man progresses his guide's personality should also evolve with him. But the difficulty is that if each

generation were allowed to change the religion handed down to it by the past, there would be left no certainty of truth, no continuity of tradition, no inspiration from example. Each generation would be the law unto itself. These difficulties are met in Sikhism by the peculiar institution of Guruship, which is both unchanging and progressive. The Guru stands for two things: Revelation of Truth through the Word, and the interpretation and practice of the Truth through Personal Guidance. The Truth as revealed in the Sacred Word does not require any change, as it incorporates bare fundamentals, like the belief in the oneness of God and the approach to Him through Love and Service. Indeed "Truth never gets old."* The details to implement the Truth, however, are left to the discretion of the ever-developing personality of the Panth. The Guru in Sikhism, therefore, never becomes a back number. "He is ever new and whole."† He is ever evolving with the collective personality of the Sikhs working with the sense of the Guru in them. Guru Nanak to whom the Sikhs owe their allegiance does not belong to the 16th century, but is a dynamic personality ever up-to-date, inspiring his Sikhs with the Truth contained in the Holy Granth and guiding them personally through the organization of the Panth.

**Sarang-ki-Var*, III.

†*Var Satta*.

Amrit or baptism was made the basis of this organization. There was no room left for any wavering on the border-line. All who would want to serve humanity through Sikhism must join it seriously as regular members, and receive its baptism as the initial step. All must have the same creed, which should be well defined and should not be confused with the beliefs and practices of the neighbouring religions. The Guru ordered that—

“The Khalsa should be distinct from the Hindu and the Muslim.”*

“He who keeps alight the unquenchable torch of truth, and never swerves from the thought of one God;

He who has full love and confidence in God, and does not put his faith, even by mistake, in fasting or the graves of Muslim saints, Hindu crematoriums, or Jogis’ places of sepulchre;

He who only recognizes the one God, and no pilgrimages, alms, non-destruction of life, penances, or austerities;

And in whose heart the light of the Perfect One shines,—he is to be recognized as a pure member of the Khalsa.”†

Such a Khalsa was to embody in himself the

**Rahitnama* of Chaupa Singh.

†*Swayyas* of Guru Gobind Singh.

highest ideal of manhood, as described by Guru Gobind Singh in an unpublished book, called *Sarb Loh*. Although the Khalsa was designed by the Guru himself, yet the Guru was so charmed by the look of his own creation that he saluted it, in the book, as his own ideal and master. The Khalsa was thought fit enough to administer baptism of the new order to the Guru, and was consecrated as the Guru incarnate. As a sign that the Guru had placed himself eternally in his Sikhs, it was declared by him that—

“Let him that wishes to see me go to an assembly of Sikhs and approach them with faith and reverence; he will surely see me amongst them.”*

In the ranks of the Khalsa, all were equal, the lowest with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes. Women were to be baptized in the same way as men and were to enjoy the same rights. The “*Sarbat Khalsa*,” or the Catholic Assembly of Sikhs, met once at the Akal Takht, Amritsar, on the occasion of Dewali or Baisakhi, and felt that they were one. That was a visible realization of their ideal of oneness. All questions affecting the welfare of the community were to be referred to the *Sangats*, which would decide them in the form of resolutions called *Gurmattas*, or the Decisions

**Prem Sumarag.*

of the Guru. A Gurmatta duly passed was supposed to have received the sanction of the Guru, and any attempt made afterwards to contravene it was taken as a sacrilegious act.

CHAPTER IV

FORMS AND SYMBOLS

This institution of the Khalsa entails certain additional disciplinary outfit in the shape of baptismal forms and vows which are often misunderstood. People cannot easily understand how it is that, while in *Asa-di-Var* the Guru ridicules certain forms and symbols, the Sikh religion has some which it considers as a regular part of its constitution.

It is true that if religion were only a matter of individual concern, there would be no need for forms or symbols. But religion, as taught by the Gurus, is a force that not only ennobles individuals but binds them together to work for nobility in the world. Organization is a means of enlarging the possibility, scope, and effectiveness of this work. In order that an organization may itself work effectively, it is necessary that the individuals connected with it should be able to keep up their attachment to the cause and a sufficient amount of enthusiasm for it. It is, however, a patent fact that men by nature are so constituted that they cannot maintain their feelings at the same high level for a long time at a stretch. Reaction is inevitable, unless some means are devised to ensure the continuity of exertion. This is where discipline is valuable,

for it keeps up the spirit of individuals against relaxation in times of trial and maintains their loyalty to the cause even in moments of ebb. This discipline, or as it is called *esprit de corps*, is secured by such devices as flags and drills and uniforms in armies and certain forms and ceremonies in religion. Uniformity is an essential part of them. They create the necessary enthusiasm by appealing to the imagination and sentiment, and work for it in moments of depression. They are a real aid to religion, which is essentially a thing of sentiment. Man would not need them if he were only a bundle of intellectual and moral senses; but as he has also sentiment and imagination, without which the former qualities would be inoperative, he must articulate his ideas and beliefs in some forms appropriate to sentiment. These forms must not be dead but a living index of his ideal, waking up in him vivid intimations of the personality that governs his religion. They should be related to his inner belief as words are to their meaning, tears to grief, smiles to happiness, and a tune to a song. It is true that sometimes words become meaningless, when we no longer heed their sense, or the language to which they belong becomes dead. It is true that sometimes tears and smiles are only cloaks for hypocrisy, and a tune a mere meaningless jingle. But there is no denying the fact that when their inner meaning is real and

we are sincere about it, they do serve as very helpful interpreters. Forms are the art of religion. Like art in nature, these forms impose certain limitations on the ideal, but at the same time they make the ideal more real and workable for general use.

Sometimes, however, when the forms are determined, not by the necessity of uniformity which is so essential to discipline, but by local or racial causes, they narrow the applicability of the ideal and create division and exclusiveness where they should have helped men to unite. When the spirit in which they had been originally conceived dies, they become mere handicaps to religion, and the people who use them would be well advised to abandon them. A telescope certainly helps the sight when looking at things far away in the heavens, but when its lens becomes so defective that instead of helping the naked eye it proves an actual hindrance, then the telescope must be put aside. It was such forms that Guru Nanak asked the Hindus to give up. The custom of taking food within cooking squares must have been begun in the wish to eat in clean places, which is very desirable, but by the time of the Guru it had become merely a sign of exclusiveness and had no reference to cleanliness. Similarly the caste system must have been evolved as an economical practice of different peoples to carry on their avocations

differently, but it became condemnable when it relegated certain people to a degraded position, simply because their forefathers at one time had been forced to submit to it. The sacred thread was also a similar symbol of exclusiveness. It was of a different sort for different high castes, and the lower castes had to go without it, and also without the privileges attaching to it. Such forms spoiled the spirit of religion in India, and alienated the people from God. It was right, therefore, that the Guru should advise the people to 'destroy that custom which made them forget God'* and set up barriers between man and man.

The Sikh forms were not conceived in a spirit of exclusiveness, or as essential to the spiritual advancement of individual souls. They were simply appointed to serve as aids to the preservation of the corporate life of the community, and any man who likes to serve humanity through the Sikh Panth can wear them. It is possible for a man to love God and cultivate his individual soul without adopting these forms; but if he wants to work in a systematic manner not only for his own advancement but for the good of others as well in the company of Sikhs, he must adopt the disciplinary forms of their organization. It is possible for a single wrestler to acquire bodily strength equal to that of four

*Guru Nanak in *Vadhans-ki-Var*.

soldiers in uniform, but this cannot be used as an argument against the formation of armies and the use among them of uniforms and other such things for the promotion of joint action. If the same wrestler were to make a band of men like himself for some set purpose, he would see that certain forms and signs, which he had originally worn as his simple requirements, would soon begin to appear on his followers too, who would adopt them, not as useless gewgaws, but as useful helpers in maintaining their *esprit de corps* and a pride in the work associated with their prototype. Similarly the Sikhs, who are the soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh and whose religion is surcharged with his personality, find the uniform worn and ordained by him a real help in playing their part as units of the Panthic organization.

This help comes from the appeal made to sentiment by the process of association and not through any inherent efficacy of the forms themselves. This association is not with places or things, but with an ever-living personality that is itself a symbol of the Highest Personality. As is God, so is the Guru; and as is the Guru, so must be the follower. Wearing a *knicker* which ensured briskness of movement at times of action and served as an easy underwear at times of rest, an iron *ring* on his right arm as a sign of sternness and constraint, and a *sword* by his side as

an instrument of offence and defence and as an emblem of power and dignity,* the Guru presented an impressive picture of a simple but disciplined soldier. He, however, combined in himself the saintliness of the old Rishis with the sternness and strength of a knight. Therefore, like his predecessors, he kept his *hair long*, which all the world over has always been associated with saintliness. A *comb* was a simple necessity for keeping the hair clean and tidy. These were the forms with which the Sikhs were invested at the time of their baptism, in order to look exactly like their Master, as they were to behave exactly like him.

From the history of the Sikhs in the past as well as in the present, it is quite evident how effectively these baptismal forms, with the accompanying vows, have helped them to keep themselves united and their ideals unsullied even in times of the greatest trial. While keeping the Sikhs associated with their Guru and maintaining his spirit among them, they have not produced any narrowing effect on their beliefs and modes of worship. Rather, as history tells us, changes for the worse have always synchronised with the lack of insistence on the baptismal vows. This was in the days of the Sikh rule, when luxury and power tempted our people to consider the

*"Charity and Kirpan are symbols of self-respect."—*Pakhiano Charitra*, 322.

vows too hard for them. They lost their identity as Sikhs and became as superstitious about God and His worship as they had been before the time of the Gurus. With the modern revival the Sikhs have found themselves again; and with the old faith in the efficacy of the baptismal vows they still believe that God is one and that there is no worship more pleasing to him than the heart-felt singing of His hymns. All worship and ceremony, whether in the temple or the home, whether at birth, marriage, or death, consists of nothing else but praying and chanting hymns. Could anything be simpler?

CHAPTER V

SIKHS AND ORGANIZATION

I

When Yogis asked Guru Nanak to work a miracle, he replied that, in carrying on his mission he relied on nothing but the Word and the Assembly.* Wherever he went, he left behind him a *sangat*, or association of his followers, with an injunction to build a *gurdwara*, or temple, for the purpose of meeting and singing his hymns together, and in a short while a network of Sikh temples sprang up all over the country. There were centres of his mission in Junagarh, Kamrup (Assam), Surat, Cuttack, Behar, Johar (Sbathu), Nanakmata (Kumaon Hills), Khatmandu, the Persian Gulf, Kabul, Jalalabad and other places. Many of these temples, such as Nanakbara at Surat and Nanakmata in Kumaon, in spite of long isolation, are still intact, although most of the incumbents of these places are not conversant with the Sikh Scriptures or Sikh thought. Remnants of old *sangats* founded by Guru Tegh Bahadur or Diwan Mahan Singh of Patna still exist in Colombo, Rameswaram, Madras, Satur, Kanjliban, Adilabad in Hyderabad (Deccan), Mirzapur, Chittagong, Dhubri in Assam, and other places in the East. Very old copies of the

*Bhai Gurdas's *Odes*, i.42.

Guru Granth Sahib and autograph letters of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, addressed to different *sangats*, are found in these places. From the 11th Ode of Bhai Gurdas, a missionary Sikh of the time of the Fifth Guru, we get a list of prominent Sikhs who lived in Kabul, Kashmir, Sarhind, Thaneswar, Delhi, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Ujjain, Burhanpur, Gujerat, Suhand, Lucknow, Piragraj, Jaunpur, Patna, Rajmahal, Dacca, and other places. In an autograph letter of Mata Sahib Kaur, the wife of Guru Gobind Singh, preserved in one of the Sikh temples at Benares, that distant city is called the 'garrison of the Guru.' In an old manuscript copy of the Holy Granth, written in 1675, is found the story of a Sikh's travels in the Deccan, called *Hakikat rah Muqam*, from which we gather something about the Sikh *sangats* and temples scattered over Southern India and Ceylon.

Each *sangat* was in the charge of a leader appointed by the Guru. The position of this leader, as we learn from the *Life of Guru Nanak*, written by Bhai Sewa Das in 1588, was called *manji*, because he sat on a *manji*, or cot, when preaching to the people. Bhai Lallo was preaching in the north and Sheikh Sajjan in the south-west of the Punjab. Gopal Das was in Benares, Jhanda Badi in Bushair, Budhan Shah in Kiratpur, Mahi in Mahisar, Kaljug, a priest's

son, in Jagannath Puri, Devlut in Lushai (Tibet), Salis Rai in Patna and Behar, Raja Shivrabh in Ceylon, and a host of other workers were scattered over the whole territory visited by Guru Nanak in and outside India. Connection with the centre was kept up by the constant visits of the Sikhs to the Guru.

After Guru Nanak, through the creation of twenty-two *manjis*, or dioceses, and fifty-two *pirahs*, or parishes, the missionary work became more regular, but the sphere of its activity became narrow, as the forces it had created in the Punjab required the constant presence of the Guru there. The organization of the Sikhs had gradually progressed unnoticed, until under Guru Arjun it became a power to be reckoned with.* Each district was under a *Masand*,† whose duty

*The Sikhs in those days used to pray: 'May there be hundreds and thousands of Sikhs in every city and hundreds of thousands in every country.' 'May the Guru's Sikhs become hundreds of thousands, yea, countless in the world, and may a Sikh temple decorate every place' (Bhai Gurdas's *Odes*, xiii.19 and xxiii.2).

Khafi Khan says about the Sikhs: 'Their Guru lived like a *faqir* near Lahore. Even from the beginning he had established *sangats* and temples in every city and town of note, under a saint.'

†That these *Masands* were not tax-gatherers, as is often alleged, will appear from the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, which says that they propagated religion, and the money they brought yearly to the Guru was a voluntary offering of the Sikhs, who brought it themselves to a *Masand* according to their means. The misconception rests on the author of the *Dabistan* misusing the word *baj* (tax) as a synonym for *bheint*, which means offering, and for which the same author uses *nazar* (or offering) later on.

it was to preach religion and to be responsible to the Guru for the Sikh organizations in his diocese. At the end of the year, on the Baisakhi day, he went to the Guru, with a company of Sikhs, to give an account of the offerings received and to report on the progress of Sikhism. Amritsar, with the Golden Temple and the Sacred Book installed in it, became the central place for the Sikhs. The Guru was the central unifying personality, and, in spite of the changes in succession, was held to be one and the same as his predecessors.*

Gradually the Sikh congregations gathering round the Guru began to acquire great sanctity, until the whole spiritual authority was transferred to them. This happened after Guru Gobind Singh, when the Sikhs organized as the Panth came to assume the personality of the Guru, although the signs of this authority had begun to appear much earlier. Bhai Gurdas said on one occasion: "One disciple is a single Sikh; two form a holy association; but where there are five present, there is God Himself." Guru Ram Das in many of his sayings showed great respect for his Sikhs. Indeed he declared that "the Guru is a Sikh, and the Sikh who practises the Guru's Word is at one with the Guru" (*Asa Chhant*, IV). Guru Arjun was

*See *Supra*, pp. 26-27.

never tired of praising the manifold spiritual advantages of attending the congregational meetings; and the people, too, resorted to them as much for the sake of getting their wishes granted as for getting devotional merit. According to the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, it was an established custom that, if anybody desired a gift from heaven, he would mention it before a company of Sikhs, who would come together solemnly and pray for him. The Guru in his own case too would ask his followers to do the same for him. Guru Gobind Singh, even before he invested his Sikhs with the authority of the Panth, used to show great reverence for them. It was in these terms he once spoke about them: "It is through them that I have gained my experience; with their help have I subdued my enemies; through their favour I am exalted, otherwise there are millions of ordinary men like myself whose lives are of no account." Though a leader, he nevertheless considered himself a servant of his people: "To serve them pleases my heart; no other service is so dear to my soul." "All the substance in my house, nay, my soul and body are at their disposal."

When the devolution of full powers came, the Khalsa stood out as the embodiment of the Guru. It was considered to be holy enough to administer baptism to Guru Gobind Singh himself. The Guru enjoined upon the Sikhs to elect five

Blowed Ones from among themselves for any executive work, and he promised to be present among them. The whole commonwealth of the Sikhs was called the *Sarbat Khalsa*, in whose name all prayers were offered and all public decisions made. Questions of Panthic interest were discussed in the plenary gatherings at the Akal Takht, to which all Sikhs had access. Questions of local interest were discussed in local conclaves, called *sangats*, which existed everywhere. Even ordinary breaches of the rules of conduct were punished in such representative meetings, and no person, however highly placed, was above the jurisdiction of these conclaves. Even Guru Gobind Singh was once fined Rs. 125 for lowering his arrow in salute before the tomb of a saint, a thing which he had done to test the discernment of his followers. When a Sikh committed some fault, it was expected that he would present himself before the nearest *sangat*, and, standing with folded hands in the lowest place where shoes are kept, would make an open confession of his fault. The congregation would refer the question to a duly elected Commission of Five, who would consider the case among themselves and report their decision to the assembly. The assembly would then confirm the decision by a hearty shout of *Sat Sri Akal*. The punishment meted out was willingly received, and was euphemistically called 'getting a reward

or salary.' There was no rancour left in the heart of the man who was punished, for the punishment came from the whole *sangat*, represented by no enemies, but by five Loved Ones.

II

It was the self-contained organization of the Sikhs that turned the Mogul Government against them, and it was their organization that saved them in times of persecution (1716-1763), when prices were put on their heads, when to grow long hair was held a crime,* their presence in cities was banned, and they had to roam about in *jathas*, or bands, in the deserts of Rajputana or in the forests of the Northern Punjab. The daily prayer of the Sikhs, with the words, 'May God's protection and grace extend to all the bodies of the Khalsa, *wherever* they are,' still pathetically reminds them of the time when their sacred places were in the hands of others or were desecrated by the invader, and their associations were cut off from the centre, with no link of union except this prayer.

*See Malcolm's *A Sketch of the Sikhs*. An army was sent round the country to hunt out the Sikhs who wore long hair. It was at that time that some people, who believed in Sikhism but had not the courage to face the troubles consequent on the adoption of Sikhism, began to go about without long hair. It was thus they disguised themselves to escape from harm. Such people were called *Sahjdharis*, or slow-adopters.

It was their peculiar democratic organization that in the days of the *Missals* developed amongst them a federal form of government. Every Sikh was free and was a substantive member of the Khalsa, but their positions and their abilities were different and unequal. Therefore, feeling that all could not lead, they unconsciously developed a confederate system, in which different groups of people elected willingly to serve under different leaders. The *gurmatta*, which governed all their public actions, was adapted to the political organization also, and whenever a difference had to be decided or an expedition to be undertaken, the *sardars* of the *Missals* would come together to make a resolution before the Akal Takht.

They put up at the hospices, called *bungahs*, erected by the leaders of the *Missals* round the Golden Temple. At the time of meeting they assembled in the open space before the Akal Takht, each contingent of followers sitting behind their leader and speaking through him. Whenever a fresh point occurred to anybody, he would communicate it to his *sardar*, who alone would be the spokesman. In this way only twelve men at the most would speak.

Resolutions were not voted upon individually or passed by majorities, but were carried *nem. con.*—a thing very difficult to contemplate nowadays. And yet there were no deadlocks,

and no proceedings held up by the obstinacy of individual *sardars*. The reason is that decisions were not made by the dead weight of numbers, but by the considered voice of the accepted leaders who could not be expected to indulge in frivolous obstruction in the face of a grave Panthic crisis. The Panthic *gurmatta* was not a thing of everyday occurrence. It was resorted to only when supreme danger threatened the purity of religion from within or conjoint action was required to face a common enemy from without. Another safeguard, inherent in the constitution of the Khalsa, was helpful in avoiding deadlocks. No resolution could be put before a meeting of the Khalsa unless, as a preliminary condition, a solemn assurance was given by the leaders present that they were positively one in the Guru. If they had any old scores still to settle, they—as many as had differences—would retire for a time to make them up; and when they had done so, they would come forward and announce that they had made peace and were fit to take part dispassionately in the *gurmatta*. Then the presiding officer of the Akal Takht would declare that the Khalsa was again one in the Guru, and therefore he could put the *gurmatta* before them. The wording of the resolution was then announced and discussion followed.

There were three other similar seats of Panthic authority, distributed all over India: one

at Keshgarh in Anandpur, where the Khalsa was originally baptised by Guru Gobind Singh, to take cognizance of cases referred to it from the eastern Punjab; another at Patna, the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh, to serve the needs of the Sikhs in eastern India; and a third at Nander in Hyderabad (Deccan), where Guru Gobind Singh had died. These three *Takhts*, or thrones, were meant as centres of religious authority, and appeals were addressed to them only in cases of dispute about the correctness of ritual. The Akal Takht, however, combined political power with religious suzerainty, and has always been looked up to as the greatest centre of Panthic control. It was there also that relations with foreign powers were discussed and treaties signed. This continued till 1809, when the last political *gurmatta* was held. After this Maharaja Ranjit Singh abolished the custom of holding a *gurmatta* for political purposes, and began to take action on the advice of non-Sikh as well as Sikh counsellors.

For this departure from the old practice the Maharaja is often blamed by Sikh writers as being the destroyer of a very old Sikh institution. In fact, if we study aright the ideals of Sikhism, we shall see that this abolition of *gurmatta* in the political sphere was a long-awaited fulfilment of the Sikh ideal: the secularization of service. It began with the Guru's free kitchen which was

open to all. The civic sense was further developed among the Sikhs when the Fourth and the Fifth Gurus set the example by helping Hindus and Muslims as well as Sikhs to set up their business in the Guru's Market (Guru-ka-Bazar) in Amritsar, and Guru Hargobind founded cities and built temples and mosques at his own expense. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was only following in their footsteps when he took measures to rule, not as a Sikh monarch, but as the common ruler of Hindus and Muslims as well as of Sikhs. There was a time when Muslims regarded themselves as foreigners and Hindus were down-trodden and looked upon as nobodies in the political sphere. In those days the Sikhs alone were the true nationals, and were right in acclaiming "the Khalsa shall rule" (*Raj karega Khalsa*). When Ranjit Singh came to the throne, he wanted to make Hindus and Muslims feel that they were as much the people of the land as the Sikhs, and had the same right to be consulted as his own co-religionists. He therefore abolished the rule of the Akal Takht so far as political affairs were concerned, and began to take the advice of ministers who were drawn from the ranks of all communities. The *gurmatta* of the Akal Takht had no place in such a secular scheme. It would have put a great strain on the loyalty of his Hindu and Muslim subjects, if he

had still tried to rule over them by the religious edicts issued from the Mecca of the Sikhs.

His abolition of the Sikh *Missals* can also be explained from the same point of view. The *Missals* were Sikh powers, their leaders always being Sikhs and their decisions always taken by religious *gurmattas*. Such a system was necessary as long as Hindus were politically dead and Muslims were aliens, but now that the right of citizenship was extended to them and they were to form a respectable and self-conscious part of the Punjab nation, the rule of a communal federation over them had grown out of date, and was rightly brought to an end by a power that was to be called the *sircar* of all. The *Missals* in the beginning had developed the Sikh character to a high degree and the noblest features of the Sikh organization appeared in those days; but about the time of Ranjit Singh they had lost their old efficacy and the selfishness and internecine quarrels had reduced the democratic forms to a mere farce.

After the abolition of political *gurmatta*, religious *gurmatta* was allowed to continue, but as the occasions on which it had to be used became rarer and public spirit being dead, it fell into the hands of illiterate fanatics or the irresponsible incumbents of temples, who made it degenerate out of all recognition.

It was the destruction of the democratic spirit that undermined the Panthic strength and missionary activity of the Sikhs. It was at that time, and not during Farrukh Siyer's days of wholesale persecution, that Sikhism suffered the greatest harm. Sikhism can work best through associations, when the different equal individualities are gathered into one. Even the Sikh prayer is not individualistic. It is from all and for all. In it the Sikh invokes, after God, all the ten Gurus and the deeds of those great Sikhs who have suffered for the Panth, and brings before his mind the present organic life of the community, with its different associations and meeting-places scattered everywhere; thus steeping himself everyday in the association of those who constitute the past and present history of the Panth. There is no word by which other communities can rally themselves as a whole. The Catholics have the word 'Church,' but it cannot be used to connote all the functions of a nation, not only its history, but its military, worldly and religious life and associations as well. The word 'Khalsa' includes all the institutions and activities of the Sikhs. There are great possibilities for the Sikhs as long as they can feel that they are the Khalsa. Even Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in order to succeed with the Sikhs, had to keep up the forms and conventions of the Khalsa. When after him there came confusion and no

stable head was allowed to rule for a long time, it was the regimental *panchayats*, formed from the country representatives, that maintained some form of government.*

Look at the activities of the Sikhs outside India, in Malaya, China or Canada, and you will find ample proof of their love of organization. They are a sociable people; and even when there are only two or three individuals, they will find an opportunity to meet and please themselves by singing a few hymns together. If there is a sufficient number of them, they are certain to found a temple and to form an association to meet therein. With this instinct inherent in them and the tradition behind them, whenever they are free to think about themselves, they seek to form themselves into *jathas* or *diwans* (societies) in order to carry out the required propaganda.

III

The present is a time of revival; and, just as during the time of their fall the Sikhs had completely forgotten themselves, they have now to rediscover practically all their institutions. They are taking advantage of the tradition, imperfectly preserved in the army, or at the *takhts*, which are the four traditional seats of religious authority

*See Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs*, p. 239.

at Amritsar, Anandpur, Patna, and Nander (Deccan), or as recorded in the *Rahatnamas* and other historical literature; but the material available is very scanty and there is great scope for the use of imagination in reconstructing the past tradition. Since there is a great lack of education among the Sikhs, their imagination is not always used to the best advantage in the work of reconstruction, and as there is no one central body to give unity and coherence to their religious decisions, there are appearing among certain impatient reformers some very strange and anomalous customs and institutions quite alien to the liberal spirit of the Khalsa. The mass of the intelligent leaders, however, are wisely checking themselves from any hasty reform of the doctrine, and are very busy in promoting mass education and temple reform, and in trying to secure a central representative body for all Sikhs. They have made great strides in education and their progress in this direction, if it were unchecked by the Educational Department, would be very rapid. As a result of strong agitation, carried on with unprecedented sacrifice, they have obtained control over most of the historical *gurdwaras*, or temples, and have secured a law to help them to obtain control over the remaining ones, whose possession is yet disputed. To exercise this control, they have been provided with a central assembly, freely elected with the vote of every

adult Sikh, man and woman. It is called the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. The right of voting accorded to women is likely to produce most far-reaching results, as this gives them a share in the deliberations of the highest association of the community in charge of the temples and the ritual. This Association, however, has only a limited scope, and cannot guide and control all the activities of the Panth. The Sikhs are not agreed whether they should have another association, which would wield a higher and more comprehensive authority, or whether they should content themselves with the one already obtained for the control of *gurdwaras*.

The question of having a supreme Panthic body is most important. At the death of the last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, when the Sikhs got spiritual home rule, and, wielding the power and authority of the Panth, became masters of their own destiny, they had to dispense with the personal leadership of one man. It was inevitable that, for the exercise of corporate authority, they should create for themselves a central body; but for some reason or other they have not been able, even now, to provide themselves with this most elementary necessity. In the beginning, when they were left to themselves, they loosely followed the Greek method of the direct participation of every individual in the counsels of the Panth, and for this purpose had yearly or half-yearly

gatherings of the *Sarbat Khalsa* (the whole people) at the Akal Takht. When persecutions became rife, these meetings were impossible, and the authority rested solely in the Akal Takht. During the rule of the Missals, the numbers of the *Sarbat Khalsa* became unwieldy and it was necessary to have some system of representation; but the general ignorance and the newly-acquired lust for power had corrupted the democratic genius of the people, and there appeared on the scene a man of supreme influence in the person of Ranjit Singh, whose ambition was to give the Sikhs an empire similar in power and dignity to that of the Moguls, and whose surroundings did not encourage him to think along the lines of representative institutions. During his time no central association or parliament was possible and the people lost their hold on the first principles of Sikhism and its institutions. When their rule was supplanted by the British, they were too degenerate and broken-hearted to think of representative assemblies. With the coming of education and a knowledge of Western institutions, the Sikhs, too, began to form *diwans*, or associations, to take in hand the work of education and social and religious reform. Owing, however, to the instinctive self-assertion of the Sikhs and to the lack of a wholesale awakening among them, which could be possible only with mass education, no one association was able to

take the lead. The suffering of the six years (1921-26), however, has welded them together as nothing else did before, and, in matters of religion, they have learnt to obey one central body. The new law of temples has given them, for the first time in their history, an association representative of their whole community; but, as I have said before, it cannot take the place of the central body, which should wield the *whole* authority of the Panth.

IV

Should they have a separate body for this purpose? There is some difficulty in achieving this. The main point at issue is whether politics should or should not be included in the scope of its work. In order to make this difficulty of the Sikh organization clear it is necessary to throw some light on its relation with the State. Guru Gobind Singh at a time of peace exhorted his Sikhs to recognize the house of Babar as supreme in worldly power, just as they recognized the house of Guru Nanak as supreme in religion. Yet, owing to certain unfortunate developments in history, the constitution of the Panth does not contemplate the acceptance of the superiority of any earthly power outside its pale. During the last 300 years, during which their institutions have grown and developed, the Sikhs have seldom had any chance to work in co-opera-

tion with any government other than their own. Either they have been in conflict with the ruling powers or they have been ruling themselves. It is only for the last eighty years or so that they have had occasion to serve under the British Government. Even then they have had no political status of their own, nor have they been fully self-conscious. It is only quite recently that they have witnessed the growth of their institutions to their full stature, and with it has come the old conflict. The Sikhs must boldly face the fact that their organization, if revived strictly on its original lines, must clash with the government of the land, or, for that matter, with any other organization that is not Sikh. For, each Sikh having personal relations with the Panth as Guru, must in all cases give his first obedience to it. Therefore, whenever there is a difference with any body other than the Panth, there is no possibility of compromising the Panth, as it would be lowering the flag of Guru Gobind Singh. This gives strength and makes the Sikhs unbending under the stress of greatest suffering; but it also obliges them to be uncompromising whenever their collective will expressed in *gurmatta* form is opposed to another will. This is all right in religion, which admits of no conscious compromises with outsiders, because there we have to deal with doctrines and dogmas which are exclusive and fixed; but in politics or other worldly matters,

where things are not absolutely sectarian but have to be shared in common with others, and where the co-operation of other communities is essential, an uncompromising attitude does not always succeed, and has often to be modified to suit the conveniences and prejudices of others. But a *gurmatta* is a *gurmatta* and having once received the sanction of the Guru Panth admits of no give-and-take from any non-Sikh power. This was exemplified recently, when the Sikh leaders could not hold any direct communication with the Government on the question of the Gurdwara Bill, because a *gurmatta*, to the effect that unless prisoners were released first no talk was to be held with the Government, stood in their way. This created differences, because most of the leaders were convinced of the futility of the resolution, and therefore in the end, after much suffering, they had to resort to indirect negotiations with the Government. Hence most of the compromises made with the Government were secret, and known only to the leaders, but kept veiled from the eyes of the general public, to escape from the stigma of lowering the prestige of the *gurmatta*. This is responsible for the present split between the Sikh masses, who, following the old spirit, are uncompromising, and their more intelligent leaders, who think they should make compromises for the Panth when necessary, even

when the letter of the *gurmattas* stands in their way.

The best way out of the difficulty would be to modify the constitution in the light of the present circumstances, to confine the *gurmatta* only to those matters which are strictly religious and to separate from them the political matters, for which resolutions carrying more earthly prestige should be passed. Two main circumstances justify this change. In the first place, our political outlook has changed radically since the days when the foundations of the Panth were laid. In those days the Khalsa was completely independent: God above and the Panth below, with no earthly power to intervene. Now even the most free-minded Sikh is in favour of the British connection, or at least in favour of *swaraj*, which means the rule not of the Sikhs alone, but of all Indians—Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh. In those days the country could belong to one party only, either Hindu, or Sikh or Muslim; but now patriotism has changed its meaning, and includes love for the rights of other communities besides our own. Many questions which were supposed to belong exclusively to the Sikh community are now of equal concern to other communities as well, and have therefore passed out of the jurisdiction of the Panth. The question of the Punjabi language, for example, which the Sikhs had made a particular concern of their own, must now pass

on to some society representing the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. There was a time when, on a complaint being received from a Brahmin that his wife had been taken away by the Nawab of Kasur, the Missals gathered at once, at the Akal Takht, espoused the cause of the husband, and sent out an expedition to avenge the wrong and restore the bride. If such a case occurred now it would have to be handed over to the police; that is, the authority of a separate power other than that of the Panth must be recognized to deal with it. Many troubles are destined to arise between the Government and the Sikhs unless this distinction is recognized; and the sooner the better. The leaders of Sikh thought owe it as a duty to their community to disillusion the masses and lay before them clearly the definite change that has been brought about in the political conceptions, and the consequent necessity of recognizing a change in the ideas of their Panthic organization.

CHAPTER VI

ARE THERE SECTS IN SIKHISM

As most religions are constituted, it is natural to expect within them the existence of sects. As long as the founder of a religion is alive, there is no possibility of dissent about principles among his followers, because the giver of those principles is present and can set all doubts at rest. When the founder is dead, doubts and differences may arise according to the change in circumstances and the mentalities of men who succeed him; and as then there is no personality present that could remove those differences or, with an authority equal to the founder's, could make one opinion acceptable to all the parties at variance, therefore those unresolved dissensions perpetuate themselves and give rise to sects.

This rule governs all religions, and hence there are sects in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. This very rule, however, makes it impossible for Sikhism to have any sects. For this fact—which must seem so strange to people who do not understand the extraordinary constitution of Sikhism—two fundamental principles of Sikhism are responsible: (1) That all the Ten Gurus were one in spirit, and (2) that after them the whole Sikh community, organized as the Panth, became the Guru.

As stated above, it is obvious that no prophet or Guru would allow any sect to be formed among his followers as long as he is alive, and therefore such a thing has never happened in history. The founders of the Sikh religion, among other things, thought of creating a permanent unity among their followers and of making their religion sect-proof. For this purpose they adopted the principle that the Guru was an everlasting personality, one and the same throughout: "There shall be one Guru, one Word and only one interpretation" (Guru III in *Var Sorath*). "The generations of followers may come and go, but the Guru himself would be ever new and whole" (*Var Ramkali*, Satta). It was impossible to secure this continuity physically. That, however, was not essential, as the unity of spirit was the only thing that mattered. Therefore it was laid down that "The spirit was the same, and so was the method; the Master merely changed his body" (*ibid*) "as one lamp is lighted from another" (Guru X). Nobody who believes in the Holy Granth can deny this; and fortunately all Sikhs, in spite of other differences, believe in the same book. There are definite verses in the Holy Granth which refer to the oneness of the Guru, and which can bear only one interpretation.*

*See page 26.

This held as long as one or other of the Gurus lived and moved among the Sikhs. After Guru Gobind Singh, as we have seen in Chapter III, the Panth was invested with the authority of the Guru. The Guru's personality in both these forms—individual and Panthic—was permanently one and could not allow the rise of sects. From the Sikh Scriptures and history also it appears that the Gurus did not allow any separate centres of Sikhism to be formed. Nobody who differed from the Guru or tried to strike out a new path deviating from his, could remain a Sikh. He could do so only by going out of Sikhism. If "the sons did not obey the Guru," they were declared according to the Holy Granth, "to be corrupt and rebellious" (*Var Satta*).* Guru Ram Das says, "Those who were banned by Guru Nanak in the beginning are now banned by the present Guru." "Those denounced by Guru Nanak were cast away, and then Guru Angad declared them as false." "They who without obeying the true Guru arrogate any position to themselves are false in their hearts and their faces blench under the shower of curses. Nobody likes to hear them. With blackened faces, they are cut off from the Guru." "Those who are faithful to the Guru shun such people, and giving up their

*See also Bhai Gurdas, *Var*, xxvi.32-33.

company associate themselves with the Guru.” “If without being allowed by the Guru, anybody were to try to get service from the Sikhs, the Guru’s Sikhs would never come near him again.” (*Var Gauri*). Accordingly the *Minas*, *Dhirmalias*, *Ram Raias*, etc., were not only outside the pale of Sikhism, but they were not even allowed to associate in any way with the Sikhs of the Guru.

UDASIS

Then what are the Udasis? Are they not a sect? From the history of their origin and the essentials of their practice it would appear that they are not a sect of Sikhism, whatever else they may be.

In the first place, it is clear from the Holy Granth and accepted history that Baba Sri Chand, the so-called founder of Udasism, had received no authority of Guruship from any of the Sikh Gurus. On the other hand, there is evidence to prove that Guru Nanak rejected him along with his brother, and appointed Bhai Lehna instead.

“Guru Nanak’s light blended with Guru Angad’s, and one became absorbed in the other. He tested his Sikhs and *his sons*, and all his followers saw what he had done. It was when Lehna was tested and purified that Guru Nanak consecrated him” (*Var Satta*). The same is

proved from the *Swayyas* found towards the end of the Holy Granth and the writings of Guru Gobind Singh. The first stanza of the Daily Prayer of the Sikhs, which the Udasis also repeat, gives the same succession of Gurus. The second Guru also rejected his own as well as Guru Nanak's sons and appointed Guru Amar Das as his successor.

“Marking to whom the signs from on high pointed, Guru Angad entrusted the great position of Guruship to Amar Das. He had tested his own and his brother's sons, his sons-in-law, his relatives and other people round about, and had disillusioned them of their own self-importance” (*Var Bilawal*, IV). Similarly the other Gurus tested their Sikhs and their sons and selected the best man available for the position of spiritual leadership. None of these was an Udasi. Some people, influenced by the prejudices born of the present controversies, have taken up an unprecedented and unhistorical attitude in the matter, and have begun to say that they believe only in the first nine Gurus and not in Guru Gobind Singh. This runs counter to all reason and the past practices of the dissenters themselves. The Daily Prayer, which has so far been common to all kinds of Sikhs, including the Udasis, contains the confession of allegiance to the Tenth Guru as well as to the other Gurus. They might add other names subsequently, but the first Ten

Gurus are common in all invocations. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself, in his own words, recorded in the Holy Granth as his last message, refers to the Tenth Guru as the Guru after him: "There remains the Name, the holy man and the Guru Gobind." No believer in the Holy Granth can deny the Guruship of the Tenth Guru. For the matter of that, no one who believes in Guru Nanak can refuse allegiance to any of his nine successors. In the Holy Granth great emphasis is laid on the fact that each Guru while yet alive appointed his successor, and placing five pice before him, fell at his feet and hailed him as the next Guru. He also made his followers do the same in his presence, so that there might be no chance of any schisms arising afterwards. Satta and Balwand say in *Var Ramkali* that "the Master consecrated Lehna while he was himself living," and that "Nanak the Guru bowed before his disciple while he himself was yet alive." The fourth Guru says in *Var Gauri* that "Guru Angad while he himself was in existence consecrated Guru Amar Das;" and Sunder in his *Sadd* says that "the Third Guru himself, even in his life, crowned Ram Das as the Guru and made all his disciples, sons, brothers and relations fall at the latter's feet." So did the other Gurus who came after them. Now, anybody who believes in Guru Nanak must, in obedience to his last command, give

allegiance to Guru Angad, otherwise he would be denying Guru Nanak himself; and one who believes in Guru Tegh Bahadur must acknowledge Guru Gobind Singh as Guru Tegh Bahadur himself did before his death, otherwise he would be denying even Guru Tegh Bahadur.

As long as any one of these Gurus was living no other person was acknowledged as Guru. In the time of the Third Guru there was some danger of certain Sikhs in ignorance gathering round Baba Sri Chand and others. Guru Amar Das anticipated the trouble and ordered that "there was no Guru except the consecrated Guru, and that it was disreputable not to acknowledge him" (*Asa-patti*, III). The instruction was also to be only one and the same for all, therefore he declared in his *Anand* that all compositions, except those of the Guru, were imperfect, and the Sikhs were to read and sing only those which came from the consecrated Guru. The writings of the Fourth Guru also reveal much of this struggle, and are concerned chiefly with the winning back of straying Sikhs into the proper fold and demolishing the threatened centres of separate organizations within Sikhism. He was pre-eminently successful in this work of unification among the Sikhs of the Guru, and in honour of the happy occasion he composed the following in *Var Gauri*: "Those to whom God gives greatness, receive homage from all people. Why should we

fear it coming, when we do nothing in selfishness? It is only God's glory that increases thus. Mark, O brethren, this arena (i.e., the Sikh Church) of the true and loved God who with His own force has brought low all those people." After this there was no danger of any schism arising in Sikhism, except once when on the death of the Eighth Guru so many of his relatives, taking advantage of the obscurity of his last words, tried to set up different *gaddis* in Bakala. Here too the good sense of the Sikhs, led by Makhan Shah, saved the situation and brought out the true Guru, Tegh Bahadur.

Another important thing to remember is that Baba Sri Chand had no religious quarrel with Guru Nanak or his successors. His grievance was only a personal one, as a result of his misunderstanding the true position of Guruship. His idea was that the Guruship was a kind of household property which should have come to him of necessity, as he was the eldest son of Guru Nanak; and that his father on account of his advanced age had not been able to properly judge of his rights, and being obsessed by the obligations of service to Bhai Lehna had given him his *gaddi*. This cannot be called a religious difference. If it was, as some hold, a religious difference, then he was no Sikh, and any foundation he may have laid must be counted as being outside Sikhism. In that case, Udasism would

be no instance of a sect in Sikhism, and a matter quite outside the range of our present discussion. In my opinion it was only a family quarrel. In other matters, which mainly concerned religion, Sri Chand had no differences with his father, except that he was personally a recluse. He had the same ideas as any other Sikh about God, man, nature, the soul, good and evil. He read and recited the same hymns of his father as other Sikhs did, and led a very pure life. After some time, as he grew older, he forgot his imaginary grievances and was gradually drawn more and more closely towards the Gurus, until he came completely round to their views, and before dying in 1629 bestowed his mitre and necklace on Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind. The words of Sri Chand addressed to Guru Hargobind at the time of adoption were: "The Guruship was already with you. I had only the faqir's mitre, and now that too is given over to your family."* This event, instead of laying the foundation of a new schism, marks the closing scene of the reconciliation movement between the two estranged families, and confirms the unity of the Sikh organization for which the previous Gurus had worked so hard. If the Guru had thought that Sri Chand was founding a sect, would he, as an honest

**Suraj Prakash*, v.27.

prophet, have allowed his son to go over to a schismatic?

This Baba Gurditta was a married man and a soldier. At the same time he was a saint. He resembled Guru Nanak very much in appearance and wore the same kind of dress as was worn by the First Guru during his *Udasis* or preaching tours. He was asked by his father to take up the missionary work, which the Guru was anxious to maintain not only in the Punjab but to extend beyond to the north and east, and which owing to his own engagements of war was likely to suffer a great deal. In 1636 he was asked by his father to appoint four *Masands* or preachers, which he did, investing them with his own peculiar dress in which he had symbolized himself as Guru Nanak before Pir Budhanshah. Their names were: Almast, Phul, Gonda and Balu *Hasna* (so called because he had burst out laughing when given the queer dress to wear). They founded what are called *Dhuāns* or hearths, and were very zealous preachers of Sikhism. As the *Masands* or missionaries appointed by the earlier Gurus became more and more corrupt, this new order of preachers attained more prominence and was especially useful in spreading Sikhism in far distant and difficult places.

Besides the four *Dhuāns*, in the course of time many other similar centres of missionary work,

called *Bakhshishes* or bounties, were founded. The most important of these are the following:—

(1) *Of Bhagat Bhagwān.* Bhagat Gir, a Bairagi monk, while going with his followers to visit the goddess of Hinglāj, came to Dera Baba Nanak, where he met Dharam Chand, the grandson of Guru Nanak through Lakhmi Chand, and was attracted towards Sikhism. He went to Guru Har Rai, who converted him and his followers to Sikhism and, renaming him Bhagat Bhagwān, appointed him to preach Sikhism in the east, where he and his followers established about 360 *gaddis*, most of which are still extant.

(2) Another Bakhshish, called *Sangat Sahib*, is after the name of Bhai Pheru, who was a devoted Sikh of Guru Har Rai. The Guru, who was pleased with his service in the *langar* or free kitchen, made him a *masand* to preach Sikhism in the central districts of the Punjab. When Guru Gobind Singh was punishing the *masands* who had become corrupt, Bhai Pheru was also hauled up. He came in extreme humility, holding his beard in his hands, and the Guru was so charmed with his devotion, that he bestowed upon him one-half of his own turban and the title of *Sangat Sahib* or the Guru's companion. He was also called the True-beard. He was reinstated and given charge of the preaching in the Lamma Nakka district between the rivers Ravi and Beas.

(3) There was a third Bakhshish, called *Ramdaske*, granted by Guru Tegh Bahadur to Baba Gurditta, a great-grandson of Baba Budha. The successors of this preacher are found at Ramdas, Muradabad, Nainakot, Teja, etc.

(4) The fourth Bakhshish was named after *Bakht Mal*, a *masand* in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. Seeing that other *masands* were being punished for their sins, he put on female clothes with bangles and a nose-ring, and took refuge with the ladies of the Guru's house. He was spared on their recommendation. His successors still wear red-coloured ladies' bangles in memory of the event, and are found at Chak in the district of Jullundur.

(5) The fifth Bakhshish was of *Mihn Sahib*, who was so called for supplying water in rain-like abundance to the congregations of the Ninth Guru. Guru Tegh Bahadur appointed him to the Bakhshish at Dhamtan in Patiala. After some time Mihn Sahib appeared before Guru Gobind Singh with a kettle-drum and was rewarded for his devotion with a flag and one-half of the Guru's turban.

(6) and (7) There were two other Bakshishes, one named after *Ajit Mal* who was a *masand* of Guru Gobind Singh at Fatehpur in the south, and the other after *Dakhni Rai*, a Sodhi of Gharacho in Patiala.

It will be seen that all these Bounties were connected with the Sikh Gurus and received instruction and authority from them. It is therefore not difficult to see which kind of Sikhism they must have preached. It was the same that was founded by Guru Nanak and preached by his successors. The Seventh, Ninth and Tenth Gurus, who had appointed them, could not have allowed them to uphold or spread views different from their own.

OTHER SIKHS

As we shall see, the Udasis were not the only order of preachers set up by the Gurus, who, in fact, had been appointing missionaries in accordance with the needs of the times. In the time of Guru Nanak the Sikh *sangats* or congregations were scattered all over India, even outside, and the centres of preaching appointed by him were called *manjis*.^{*} Guru Amar Das reorganized the *manji* system on a provincial basis, because by his time the circle of Sikhism had been narrowed down to the Punjab, as the forces it had created had raised so much opposition nearer home that the presence of the Guru was constantly needed there to prevent disintegration. The system, however, did not work long, and Guru Arjun

^{*}See the *Life of Guru Nanak* written by Sewa Das in 1588; and also the old *Janam Sakhi* in the India Office (Colebrooke), p. 169.

had to institute a new order of missionaries, called *masands*, who, in addition to being preachers, had also to collect *daswandh* or tithes from the Sikhs. The work began to spread far and wide, and with increased numbers and improved organization the Sixth Guru felt encouraged to think of reviving the old neglected *sangats* of Guru Nanak which were scattered abroad. He himself went as far as Nanakmatta, in U. P., preaching and organizing centres of missionary work. He had, however, so much to do with war, that he could not personally attend to the distant *sangats*, and for this purpose he appointed Baba Gurditta with a new system of *masands*, who in memory of Guru Nanak's similar tours came to be called *Udasis*.* The only difference between the *Masands* and the *Udasis* was that most of the *Masands*, while living in their own homes as exemplary men, were commissioned to work as preachers and tithe-gatherers, while the *Udasis* worked only as preachers in far and distant places, and because of the nature of their work, they did not marry. It is more difficult to live exemplary lives in the midst of families and with

*Guru Nanak himself says in his *Sidh Gosht* (17) that when he met the Yogis they asked him the reason of his becoming an *Udasi*, i.e., an itinerant preacher working away from his home; and questioned him as to why he wore a peculiar dress. Bhai Gurdas and the old Janam Sakhis also refer to the Guru's life during his missionary tours as *Udasi*.

temptations attending the collection of money, so the Masands grew more and more corrupt until their existence became a scandal and Guru Gobind Singh had to abolish their order. When in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh decreed that the ceremony of baptism must be gone through by all who wished to adopt Sikhism, he added the name of Masands to the list of other ostracized classes, such as the Minas, Dhirmalias, Ramraias, etc., whose company was forbidden to the Sikhs. After this, anybody who wanted to become a Sikh must be baptized, and those who were to work as missionaries had to observe the same rite. The nucleus of these baptized missionaries was formed from those who had received a Sanskrit education at Benares and who by living among Pandits had acquired the name *Nirmala*, which is a Sanskrit synonym for *Khalsa*, both meaning the 'purified ones.' They lived pure, ascetic lives like the Udasis, from whom they differed only in the matter of baptism and the baptismal forms. The order to get the baptism of the sword was issued to all Sikhs,*

*" The Guru sent orders to the following effect to all the *Sangats* wherever they were:

' The Sikhs should wear long hair and come to me.
Once a man becomes a Sikh, he should never shave
himself;
He should not touch tobacco,
And should receive baptism of the sword! ' "

—*Suraj Prakash*, iii.21.

and, according to a Persian newswriter of the period, about twenty thousand were baptized in one day. It was physically impossible to baptize the whole nation at once. It required time, but time was not given. Soon after this ceremony the Guru was compelled to mobilize all his Sikhs to fight for their lives. The very Sikhs who had to form *jathas* to administer the new ceremony to the far-flung *sangats* of Assam, Chittagong, Surat, etc., were called upon to fight; even the Guru's own little children had to do their share. The Guru lived only nine years after this, of which only a small part was spent in the Punjab; and all this time was given up to military campaigns, during which the Guru had often no place to live in or any shelter for the night. He managed to maintain the morning and evening *diwans*, at which all who sought entrance into Sikhism were baptized: but even this did not bring in all the distant *sangats* who believed in Sikhism but could not come such a long way to conform to the latest injunctions. For this reason many of the professed Sikhs remained without baptism.

Close upon this came the time of persecution, when to be a baptized Sikh was to court death; for the Government of the time had banned the presence of Sikhs in cities and had put prices on their heads. The regular Sikhs went away into the jungles. It was at that time that some

people, who believed in Sikhism but would not go to the length of dying for it, began to go about without the outward signs of Sikhism. This was a kind of disguise adopted by them to escape trouble. They represented themselves to the regular Sikhs as *Sahjdharis* or gradual-adopters, a kind of informal Sikhs. They believed in the same principles as the regular Sikhs in exile, whom they helped with money and provisions in times of need, and whom they would join as baptized brethren as soon as they found themselves ready for sacrifice.

The Panth was in exile; but the temples remained behind. They were attended by the Sahjdhari congregations and were supervised by Sahjdhari mahants, that is, the Udasis. They could not, however, protect the temples against desecration. In such cases the *Nihangs* or soldier-priests were of great use, or the Panth would send heroes like Bhai Mehtab Singh or Baba Dip Singh to come to the rescue.

When the Panth returned from the jungles and established Sardarships and Missals, the Udasis were replaced by Singhs in the management of the Durbar Sahib, Amritsar, and other temples. In most places they were still retained, and large grants of land were made to them by the Sardars for their upkeep. The reason was that the Sardars themselves by that time had forgotten the old significance of the initiation,

and the acquisition of wealth and power had made them lax in their principles. These Udasis held the same views as the general body of Sikhs: otherwise how could they have found support and encouragement from the Khalsa? One sect does not support the preaching of another sect.

The mistake, however, of allowing the uninitiated to remain in charge of their temples brought about a general back-sliding movement among the Sikhs, until they fell into the same slough of superstition and apathy from which their Gurus had tried to rescue them. In the latter half of the 19th century several attempts were made to reform the religion, to restore the worship of the Formless and Invisible God in place of idolatry, and to introduce love for the Name among the worldly-minded Sikhs. This resulted in the setting up of two movements, called *Nirankari* (worshippers of the Formless) and *Namdhari* (upholders of the Name). Both of them did a lot of good in their own way; but want of education led them to ignore the implications of the principles of the oneness of the Guru and the Guruship of the Panth. Thrown upon their own resources, they soon began to adopt the semblances of sectarianism. As, however, they believe in baptism and do not deny the two fundamental principles on which the oneness of the Panth hinges, it is hoped that

before long they will fall into line with the rest of the community. The differences of the Nirankaris are already obliterated almost completely; and the Namdharis too, when the present controversies are over, will be drawn more closely towards the Panth; or circumstances, especially the advancement of education, will force them out of the race and their movement, like that of the Bandais, will die a natural death. In no case can they live as a sect. After the failure of these two movements to cope with the needs of the time, there arose another reform movement, called *Singh Sabha* which, with the help of education, has devised means to restore Sikhism to its pristine purity. It embraces the whole community, and outside it are only those who through long association choose to prefer Hinduism to Sikhism or through dense ignorance cannot distinguish one from the other. The Singh Sabha people engaged in the temple reform are called *Akalis*.

Fortunately, most of the missionary orders, like the Udasis, Nirmalas, etc., originated during the lives of the Gurus, and it is therefore easy to refute the sectarianism of their origin. But, one might say, whatever may have been their origin, they have in the course of centuries acquired certain sectarian practices. Even here we see that, in spite of acquiring certain peculiarities, the historical circumstances of the depend-

ence on the Panth and the custodianship of temples belonging to all have prevented them from becoming sects, although the same circumstances have had the effect on the Sikhs of losing their ancient ideals. The clearest proof of their being no sects is the incontrovertible fact that the Udasis, Nirmalas, etc., have been converting people not to Udasism or Nirmalaism, but to the general kind of Sikhism. The Shias and Sunnis form different sects in Islam, and so do the Roman Catholics and Protestants in Christianity. The Shias hold that the true tradition of Islam has been preserved by them alone, and so far as the Sunnis differ from them, they are wrong. Therefore they convert people to the Shia form of Islam. Can we imagine them exhorting people to become Sunnis while they themselves remain Shias? Similarly can we think of the Roman Catholics encouraging conversions to Protestantism? Now what do we find in the case of the Udasis, Nirmalas, etc.? They have in their time converted thousands of people to Sikhism, not to Udasism or Nirmalaism but to the same kind of Sikhism to which the majority of Sikhs belonged. The principles they preached are the same as those preached by others, such as the descendants of the Gurus, etc. Differences there may be, but it is very important to remember that those differences do not run on the lines of Udasism, Nirmalaism, etc., but on the lines

of Hinduism or non-Hinduism. They have no separate theology peculiar to their respective sects. It is either drawn from the Sikh Scriptures (with which the *Akalis* and the *Singh Sabhias* would also agree) or it is imported *en bloc* from Hinduism, with isolated passages quoted here and there from the Holy Granth to support it. The latter is no peculiarity of any particular sect. The *Udasis*, *Bedis*, *Sodhis*, *Nirmalas*, *Singh Sabhias*, all indulge in it more or less.

The real fact is that they have been our missionaries, like the *Qazis* and *Mullas* among the *Mohammedans*. They may differ from the ordinary Sikhs in dress or some minor details of living; but by so doing they do not become sects. And the few differences in views existing between them and the modern reformed Sikhs are no more than those existing among the reformed Sikhs themselves. Some among the latter believe in *Vedant*, others do not; some still stick to the practice of untouchability or are inventing new forms of it, others discard it wholly as a nuisance; some prefer their women to tie turbans like men, others do not; some believe only in the ten *Gurus*, others set up saintly persons as co-equals of the *Gurus*. All these differences run on Hindu or non-Hindu lines, and are due to the lack of understanding regarding all the implications of the principles of the unity of the *Guru* and the *Panth*. They are gradually vanishing with the

process of discrimination and definition which Sikhism is undergoing under the dawning sense of those principles. When the Sikhs have completely realized their significance, they will be able to resolve all differences by an opportune reference to the organized authority of the Panth, and then there will be again "only One Guru, one Word and one interpretation."

CHAPTER VII

BALANCED GROWTH OF SIKHISM

Sikhism as a religious movement remained pure as long as the lust of worldly power did not contaminate it. The early Sikh Gurus had indeed fought against tyrants, but they always kept their hands clean. Although the Sixth Guru had won all the battles which he had fought, and the Tenth Guru was often victorious, they did not acquire even an inch of territory as a result of these victories; and whatever land they possessed was either bought with money or was accepted as an offering from devoted men.

The ideal of simplicity was kept up by the Gurus even when they lived in comfortable circumstances. The bards, whose compositions are included in the Holy Granth, are never tired of praising this balance of character, called *Raj Yog*, maintained midway between asceticism and prosperity. It is not correct to say that by the time of the Fifth or the Sixth Guru, the ideal of Sikhism was lowered and the Guru came to be called *Sachcha Padshah* (True King), his seat a *takht* or throne, and the assembly of his followers, a *darbar* or court. It will appear from the writings of the early Gurus, and especially from those of the bards who began to write in the time of the Second Guru, that these terms were

not later innovations but had been used from the beginning. They are eastern euphemisms used when speaking of all revered faqirs. Guru Nanak himself was called Nanak *Shah*.

A change did come over the spirit of Sikhism, but it was after the last Guru had gone away from the Punjab and had died in the Deccan. The chosen ones, who had been trained in the school of Guru Gobind Singh, and whose presence would have kept alive the spirit of truth among the masses, were called upon, soon after the death of the Guru, to fight for their lives or defend the weak from the oppressor. They were removed from amongst the common people, who were left to their own resources or had to depend upon the old professional teachers, who now had the chance of renewing their hereditary vocation of mercenary teaching. The Sikh temples fell into the hands of the monastic orders, and the congregations, depleted of initiated Sikhs, were obliged to hand over the rule to those who governed the temples.

There was another circumstance that checked the balanced growth of Sikhism. It was the fact that in later Sikh history conversions to Sikhism were confined to one community only. As this side of the question has been generally ignored, I propose to study it in some detail.

Sikhism was meant for all castes and communities, and in the beginning converts were made

from Mohammedans as well as from Hindus. Guru Nanak left a host of converts in Mesopotamia, Persia and other countries which he visited. Sewa Das in his *Janam Sakhi* (1588) mentions many places, like the Kiri of Pathans, where a large number of Mohammedans became Sikhs. From the list of Sikhs given by Bhai Gurdas (1629) in his eleventh *Var*, we find among others such names as Mardana, the rebeck player, who accompanied Guru Nanak on his journeys; Daulat Khan Pathan who became a Sikh saint; Gujar, a blacksmith, who was a Sikh of Guru Angad and preached Sikhism in his village; Hamza and Mian Jamal 'the happy' who remained constantly in the presence of Guru Har-gobind. From history we gather many names of Mohammedans who became admirers of Sikhism, like Rai Bular, the Mohammedan Chief of Talwandi, who appreciated Guru Nanak better than his own parents did; Allah Yar and Hussaini Shah, who profited spiritually by Guru Amar Das, may be considered almost as Sikhs; Akbar who was influenced in his policy of toleration and his abolition of Sati by Guru Amar Das; Mian Mir, who was so intimately connected with the work of Guru Arjun that the latter asked him to lay the foundation-stone of the Golden Temple; Dara Shikoh, who was persecuted by his brother Aurangzeb for his leanings towards Sikhism: Sayyed Budhu Shah of Sadhaura; Kale

Khan and Sayyed Beg, who fought for Guru Gobind Singh. There were others who actually became Sikhs. A few of them may be named:—Sajjan, who had been a robber but who became a Sikh of Guru Nanak and preached his religion; a Nawab's son, who was converted by Bhai Paro of Dalla in the Jullundur Doab; Wazir Khan, who was an assistant Minister of Akbar and who secretly followed the teachings of Guru Arjun; Budhan Shah, the 'Simeon' of Sikh history, who was devoted to the memory of Guru Nanak and ultimately died a Sikh, in the time of Guru Hargobind; Bibi Kaulan, who was the daughter of the Qazi of Lahore and was converted to Sikhism by Guru Hargobind; Saif-ud-Din of Saifabad in Patiala, who was converted by Guru Tegh Bahadur just before the latter's arrest; Sayyed Shah converted by Bhai Nand Lal; and a faqir called Brahmi or Ibrahim, who was the first Mohammedan who offered himself to Guru Gobind Singh to be baptized. The Guru, when baptizing this Mohammedan, who became Ajmer Singh, issued orders that "if any Muslim, whether of high or low position, in good faith desire to join the Khalsa, it is proper that he should be baptized and received into our community." These are only a few names out of many who must have embraced Sikhism. From the study of these conversions, in the time of Guru Nanak and later, we find that the Pathans,

Sayyeds and Shias, whose races had been defeated by the Moguls, were more prone to accept Sikhism than the Moguls, who had too much of the conqueror's pride to adopt the religion of the conquered. The chief complaint of Jahangir against Guru Arjun, as recorded by the Emperor himself in his *Tuzuk*, was that "so many of the simple-minded Hindus, nay, many foolish Muslims too, have been fascinated by his ways and teachings." The Guru also converted many outcastes and men of the lowest castes, such as Ramdasias or shoemakers. Guru Gobind Singh opened the door of *pahul* or equal baptism to all, even to the sweepers, who for their staunch faith came to be called *Mazhabis* or faithful. The Mazhabis are sometimes called *Ranghretas*, a term which may be due to the fact that some of them owe their origin to Mohammedans of the Rangarh clan. Because of their gallantry in rescuing the mutilated body of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh called them "*Ranghrete Guru ke bete*"—"the Ranghretas are the Guru's own sons."

Besides making impartial conversions, there were other ways too, by which the spirit of Sikhism was kept balanced. In the free kitchen, established by the Gurus as a means of levelling down all social barriers based upon caste or other prejudices, it was made a rule that all who came to take food, whether Hindus or Mohammedans,

must sit in a line and eat together.* Even Akbar and the Raja of Haripur, when they came to see Guru Amar Das, had to do the same. In order to show that those who were born among Mohammedans or low-caste Sudras were as acceptable as high-class Hindus, Guru Arjun included in his Granth the compositions of Kabir, a weaver and Mohammedan by birth; Farid, a Mohammedan saint; Bhikhan, a learned Mohammedan; Sain, a barber; Namdev, a calico-printer and washerman; Ravidas, a shoemaker; Mardana, who had been a Mohammedan drummer; and many bards, some of whom were Mohammedans. The significance of this can be best realized, if we remember that the whole Book containing these compositions is considered by the Sikhs to be divine and is held in the greatest veneration by them.

The effect of these arrangements was visible in the customs and habits of the Sikhs of those days. They considered Hindus and Mohammedans in the same light, and did not identify themselves religiously with any party. The first utterance of Guru Nanak, when he took up the work of preaching, was: "There is no Hindu, no Muslim;" and when he died, both Hindus

*"The whole congregation would come to the kitchen and, without considering any distinction of *Varna* or *Ashrama*, were seated in a line. They were treated as if they were all equally handsome and clean."—*Suraj Prakash*, Ras 1, Chap. 30.

and Muslims claimed him as theirs. Guru Arjun says boldly in his Book:

"I don't keep the Hindu fast, nor that observed by Mohammedans in Ramazan.

I serve Him, and Him alone, who is my ultimate refuge.

I have broken off with the Hindu and the Turk.

I believe in one Master, who is also Allah.

I won't go on Hajj to Mecca, nor do worship at the Hindu places.

I shall serve only Him and no other.

I won't worship idols or read Namaz.

I shall lay my heart at the feet of the One Supreme Being.

We are neither Hindus nor Mussalmans.

We have dedicated our bodies and souls to Alla-Ram" (*Bhairon*).

The author of *Dabistan*, who visited the Punjab in the time of the Sixth and Seventh Gurus, says about the Sikhs:

"The Sikhs of Guru Nanak condemn idolatry and believe that all the Gurus are identical with Nanak. They do not read the Hindu *mantras*, nor do they pay any regard to their shrines. They do not believe in the Hindu Avatars, and do not study Sanskrit, which, according to Hindus, is the language of the gods."

"The Sikhs do not have any faith in the ritual and ceremonies enjoined by the Hindu Shastras,

nor do they observe any superstitious restrictions about dining. A learned Hindu, named Partap Mal, seeing that his son was inclined towards Islam, said to him, 'There is no need for you to turn Mohammedan. If you want to get freedom in eating and drinking, you may better join Sikhism.' "

Besides opening free kitchens and distributing 'communion food' in order to teach equality, the Sikhs in their temples observed no elaborate ceremonial, and therefore there was no cause of friction that could give rise to separate sects within Sikhism. The whole religious service inside the Golden Temple consisted of nothing except the reading or singing of sacred hymns from the Holy Granth night and day. With the exception of a small interval of an hour or two at midnight, sacred music, performed by relays of singers, went on without a break. There was no preaching, no discussion was allowed, and therefore there was no controversy. This simple and beautiful custom among the Sikhs was seen and remarked upon by Sujan Rai of Batala who wrote in 1697 in the *Khulasatul Tawarikh* :

"The only way of worship with them is that they read the hymns composed by their Gurus and sing them sweetly in accompaniment with musical instruments."

Guru Gobind Singh has said quite clearly that the Sikhs, with all their sympathy and love for

other communities, are not to confuse their ideals with those of others :

“The Sikh is to keep his observances distinct from those of other people of all the four Varnas. He should have dealings with everybody, but his belief and programme of life should be different all the same.”*

The Sikhs had for a long time been able to keep their doctrines distinct and, though liberally benefiting by the Hindu and Muslim association, had been able to maintain their growth free from any obsession from either side. The opportunities for the display of this balanced spirit began to decrease, when the Sikhs began to fight against the tyranny of the Mogul Government. Guru Gobind Singh out of his abundance of love was able to inspire love even in the hearts of his enemies. Sayyed Beg, a commander of Aurangzeb, came to fight with the Guru, but on meeting him was suddenly struck with remorse and, turning away in shame, vowed never again to fight in aid of tyranny. It was Mohammedans like Budhu Shah, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan, who at the most critical times came to the aid of the Guru. The growing antipathy of the Muslims against the Sikhs began to re-act on the work of the Sikh mission among the Muslims† until, with the in-

**Suraj Prakash, Rut 3, Adhya 50.*

†At the conquest of Sarhind by Banda, however, some Mohammedans did come over to Sikhism. See *Dastur-un-Nasha*, by Yar Mohammed.

tense religious persecution started by the later Moguls against Hindus as well as Sikhs under Baba Banda, [the conversions to Sikhism were confined almost solely to the Hindu masses, who brought to the contemplation of the new moral forces revealed by Sikhism an imagination saturated with the spiritual convictions of the old era.

The same thing happened to Christianity in its early days when most of the conversions were confined to the Jews.] The proselytes were dealt with in the old Jewish manner, which made a distinction between the Proselytes of the Sanctuary and the Proselytes of the Gate. The former, who went through the ceremony of circumcision and observed the Mosaic ritual, were allowed to enter the innermost part of the Temple; while the latter, who did not conform to these rules, were declared mere sympathizers and were allowed to worship only at the gate. Christians also made the same distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The full privileges of the Christian Church were granted only to the Jewish converts who would submit to circumcision.

Similarly, when the veteran Sikhs, disciplined by Guru Gobind Singh himself, had been martyred and their descendants forced to remain in exile, the congregations which were left leaderless began to drift back to the old customs and beliefs. Those who came from low castes began to be distinguished from those who came from the so-

called high castes. Even after receiving baptism some were assigned positions at the gate, others in the sanctuary. Some, who in the days of persecution would not dare to confess Sikhism openly, were allowed to go about without the outward symbols. Such men were called *Sahjdharis* or slow-adopters. In those days, when to wear long hair was to invite death, nobody could have the heart to question the disguise adopted by the *Sahjdharis*, who believed in Sikhism but could not afford to die for it. The *Sahjdharis*, who had adopted this apologetic attitude, never pretended or claimed to be representative Sikhs. They always looked up to the spirit and form of their brethren in exile, whom they helped in every way.

The Sikh spirit and form were, however, kept intact in the ranks of the Khalsa even after it had slackened in the towns and cities. From the *Panth Prakash* of Sardar Rattan Singh, written in 1809 at the suggestion of Sir David Ochterlony, we can see that in spite of the hard times through which they had passed, the old spirit still burned clear and steady in the fighting Sikhs. They still kept aloof from idolatry, performed the *Anand* form of marriage, obeyed the Panth as the highest authority, conducted themselves by resolutions passed in their assemblies, did not believe in the sacred thread, incarnations, caste, or the pollution of food, and freely reconverted those who had

gone over to Islam. Many notable Sikhs married Mohammedan women converted to Sikhism. Some of them were: Anup Singh, who had been a Brahmin of Chanarthal; Takht Singh, who had been a Khatri of Pajigarh; Nand Singh Bairar; Kehar Singh Randhawa; Karam Singh Man, etc. Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Reis of Baghrian, baptized a Mohammedan named Maula and renamed him Ram Singh. Ram Singh's grandson, named Harcharan Singh, was still living in 1906. Saunta, a Mohammedan, was converted and named Ram Singh and his daughters were married to Ramgarhia Sardars. Bhai Hari Singh of Bhadaur was by birth a Mohammedan, whom Bhai Udhe Singh of Kainthal had converted to Sikhism. A Mohammedan, who was baptized and renamed Nihal Singh, became Mahant of the Gurdwara of Bhaliani. At the instance of Maharaja Narinder Singh of Patiala, one Sadr-ud-Din was converted to Sikhism and named Fatch Singh by Mahant Haiba Singh. For 26 years, he was the Mahant of the Dharamsala of Phul and died in 1869. Raja Sarup Singh got one Allia converted into Gyan Singh. This man became Mahant of the Gurdwara at Jind. A Mohammedan of Chugana, who was converted and renamed Massa Singh, became priest of a Sikh temple at Bhaliayna in Muktsar Pargana. Thousands of Mohammedan men and women were brought

into the fold of Sikhism in the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

When, however, Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to rule, Hindu influence gave a rude shock to Sikhism even in the ranks of the Khalsa where it had been preserved more or less in its pristine purity. The coming of luxury destroyed the simplicity and independence of the Sikhs. In fact, Sikhism is a simple and stern religion and does not easily lend itself to luxury and ease. Most of the religious and even secular ceremonies of the Sikhs contain nothing else except hymn-singing and prayer. How could a Maharaja keep his position among his brother Maharajas, if he did not invite astrologers and pandits to help him to make his coronation or marriage an imposing and circumstantial ceremony? The Sikh monarchs and grandees have always found it difficult to bend Sikhism to their taste. They have been, therefore, often obliged to go beyond the pale of Sikhism, when they wished to indulge in mere ceremony and show.

After Maharaja Ranjit Singh, when kingship became a thing of jewels and clothes, Sikhism too, with the higher classes, became a mere fashion of the turban and the beard, until a people with sterner ways and better discipline took the sceptre out of their hands. It was the people alone who still retained some semblance of the old spirit; and they too, with the change

coming over the temples, along with the shock they had received on the battle-field, felt paralysed for the time being. They declined in numbers too. The English, however, tried to befriend them and forgot their late enmity in admiration of the noble bravery of the Sikhs. This friendship put some heart again into Sikhs, and they began to enlist themselves in the British army, where they could keep their baptismal forms intact. But in all other ways the Sikhs seemed to have no life in them, either religious or national. They worshipped the same old gods and indulged in the same old superstitious practices from which their Gurus had so heroically worked to extricate them. Their baptism and five symbols became a mere anomaly. The modern Singh Sabha movement is again trying to restore the old balance.

CHAPTER VIII

SIKH RITES AND CEREMONIES

IN INDIVIDUAL LIFE

Discipline of the Word—Discipline of the Sacrament—Discipline of Service

I. DISCIPLINE OF THE WORD

(a) A Sikh is expected to rise early in the morning (at about 3 a.m.) and after taking a bath to meditate on the Name of God.

(b) He should recite the following compositions of the Gurus as his daily prayers :

Morning—The *Japji* of Guru Nanak, and the *Jāp* Sahib and the Ten *Swayyas* of Guru Gobind Singh.

Evening—*Rahiras*, including 9 passages from the Holy Granth occurring after *Japji*, a *Chaupai* of Guru Gobind Singh, and 6 stanzas from the *Anand** (the first five and the last).

Night (before going to bed)—*Sohila*.

(c) At the end of these recitations, particularly in the morning and in the evening, the Daily Prayer† is offered.

(d) Besides the recitation of daily prayers, which are private, the following practice of the

*See Appendix I.

†See the last chapter, where the prayer is given in full.

Word in public is also a part of a Sikh's daily programme. As it is carried on in congregations gathered in Gurdwaras, it will be necessary first to say something about Gurdwaras.

GURDWARAS

(a) As the Guru is manifest in *sangats*, a Sikh must join in the congregational worship held in the Gurdwaras.

(b) Guru Granth Sahib is daily opened in a Gurdwara, and is usually closed after the evening prayers.

(c) Great respect is shown to the Book when opening, reading or closing it. It is kept in clean clothes, is opened under a canopy* and a fly-flicker is always kept at hand to wave over it. When it is brought in, all those present stand up with bowed heads.

*These signs of royalty and the marked attention paid by Sikhs to the Holy Book—especially when it is exaggerated by ignorant people—give an impression to others that Sikhs worship their Book. This is wrong. Sikhs are enjoined to worship nothing but the Name (see pages 1-2). They can offer respect to any person or thing worthy of praise, but worship is due to God alone. Perhaps the Sikhs' bowing before the Book is misunderstood by Westerners whose way of salutation is different. They kiss their book as Sikhs bow before theirs, both conforming to the local custom of paying respect. Both ways of salutation are highly personal, but they cannot be called idolatry, as long as the Book is not given the place of God. In Sikhism the highest respect is paid to the Word, as in a modern state the greatest homage is paid to the law, which stands even above the king. This sovereignty of the *Shabd* or the Word was acknowledged even by the Gurus who bowed before it in reverence.

(d) It is considered superstitious to ring bells, burn incense, light ghee-lamps and wave them in *arti* before the Book. It is also objectionable to press the walls of sacred places, to bow before monumental platforms, to consecrate water by placing it under the Book, or to introduce images in worship.

(e) No other book, however good and readable, is to be installed in a Gurdwara as the Holy Granth is installed.

(f) No ceremony other than a Sikh ceremony is to be performed in a Gurdwara, nor is a non-Sikh holiday to be celebrated there.

(g) Before the Book is removed from one place to another a brief prayer is offered.

(h) When the Book is opened for the first time during the day, a prayer is offered and a passage read out.

(i) Every visitor, whether Sikh or non-Sikh, before entering a Gurdwara is expected to put off his shoes and cover his head. If his feet are dirty, he should wash them.

(j) The *prakarma*, or the circumambulation of a Gurdwara, is performed by keeping to the left of the Gurdwara.

(k) All are free to enter a Gurdwara without any consideration of caste or creed. No intoxicant or any obnoxious thing like tobacco is allowed to be taken in.

(l) The first thing a Sikh does on entering a

Gurdwara is to bow before the Book, and then standing up, with folded hands and bowed head, he salutes the assembly with the cry, "*Wāhiguru jī kā Khālsa, Wāhiguru jī kī Fateh!*" (Hail Khalsa of the Lord who is always victorious !)

(m) When making seating arrangements in a Gurdwara, no invidious distinction must be made between man and man, or between Sikh and non-Sikh. No extra respect is to be paid to an individual by providing him with a superior seat, a cushion, a chair or a cot.

(n) Women are not to veil themselves when sitting in a congregation.

(o) There are four Takhts or Thrones of Panthic Authority: (1) The Akal Takht, opposite the Golden Temple, Amritsar; (2) Patna Sahib; (3) Keshgarh at Anandpur; and (4) Hazur Sahib at Nander (in Hyderabad, Deccan).

(p) Only baptized Sikhs, who observe the baptismal vows, are allowed to enter the innermost part of a Takht. All other parts of the Takht are open to everybody, without distinction of caste or creed, except those who have apostated from Sikhism or have committed any *tankhah*, or breach of Sikh discipline.

(q) Each Gurdwara has its own flag, yellow or dark-blue in colour, surmounted with a double-edged sword.

(r) The usual order of services performed in a Gurdwara is: the opening of the Book, music,

exposition, the sermon, the *Anand*, a prayer, the reading of a passage from the Book, the distribution of Karah Prasad, and the dispersal.

SINGING OF HYMNS

In a *sangat* only hymns composed by the Gurus or their commentary by Bhais Gurdas and Nand Lal can be sung.

READING OF THE HOLY GRANTH

(a) When the congregation is assembled, the Holy Book must be kept open (covered with a scarf if nobody is reading it), and someone must sit before it.

(b) Every Sikh is expected to set apart a room in his house for the opening of the Holy Granth.

(c) He is expected to read some portion of it every day.

(d) The ordinary way of consultation is to open the Book at any page and to read the first passage occurring at the top of the left-hand page. If the passage begins on the previous page, then the page is turned over and going back the first line of the passage is found. The passage must be read as a whole.

(e) Now and then a reading of the whole Book is undertaken by a congregation or a family. This reading starts with the recitation of the

Anand,* followed by a prayer and the distribution of *Karah Prasad* (or communion food). It continues intermittently for a week, and the finish is followed by the recitation of the *Anand*, a prayer and *Karah Prasad*. In times of trouble and anxiety, the reading of the Book is carried on without a break and is finished in 48 hours. This practice began in the days when Sikhs wandered as outlaws in the jungles and were not sure of staying more than two days in one place.

KARAH PRASAD

(a) In order to remove untouchability and to teach social equality Guru Nanak started the custom of distributing *Karah Prasad* among his congregations.

(b) Anyone who has it prepared in the prescribed manner can bring it to a Gurdwara for distribution.

(c) It is a kind of pudding prepared in an iron vessel from flour, sugar and ghee, mixed in equal quantities, and is brought to the congregation. After reciting six stanzas from the *Anand*,* which is a hymn of thanksgiving, the man officiating at the function stirs the sacred food with a *kirpan* and offers prayer.

(d) Before distributing it among the congregation, he sets apart some quantity for the Five

*See Appendix I.

Beloved Ones, and gives it to five regular Sikhs who are known to keep the baptismal vows. Then the main portion is distributed without any distinction of caste or creed. All are expected to eat it there and then.

EXPOSITION OF THE HOLY GRANTH

The exposition of the Holy Word alone is allowed in a Gurdwara. Of course by way of illustration Sikh history and the compositions of Bhais Gurdas and Nand Lal are also freely drawn upon. References to other religions or their books may also be made, but in order to preserve a spiritual atmosphere strict injunctions are given to speakers to observe respect towards others.*

2. DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENT

BIRTH AND NAMING CEREMONY

(a) At the birth of a child any relation or friend may recite the invocation to God given as a prologue to *Japji* and taking a drop of honey or sweetened water on the tip of a *kirpan* may touch the tongue of the child. A prayer of thanksgiving may also be offered.

(b) When the mother rises from her confinement and is able to take a bath—no period being fixed—her friends and relatives go with her to a

*See the *Rahitnama* of Desa Singh.

Gurdwara (which may be in her own house). Hymns of thanksgiving are sung. Sometimes the continuous reading of the Holy Granth is brought to a finish. Then a passage is read out of the Holy Book. From the first letter of the first word the assembly is asked to coin a name for the child. Several names may be suggested, and the one that is ultimately approved is announced by the person presiding at the function. To a boy's name the word 'Singh,' and to a girl's name the word 'Kaur' is added. After reciting six stanzas of the *Anand** and consecrating *Karah Prasad* with a *kirpan* prayer is offered and the sacred food is distributed.

THE ANAND MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The Anand form of marriage has been observed since the earliest days of Sikhism and is mentioned in the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Daya Singh (one of the original five Beloved Ones whom Guru Gobind Singh baptized with his own hands), in Rattan Singh's *Panth Prakash*, written in 1809, in *Prem Sumarag* and in *Suraj Prakash* (both written in the first half of the 19th century). It was legalised in 1909 by the Anand Marriage Act.

(a) Sikh boys and girls are married when they are grown up, and have reached maturity.

*See Appendix I.

(b) The ceremony of betrothal is not essential. When it takes place it is a very simple affair. A few relations of the boy are invited by the parents of the girl, and a *kirpan* and some sweets are given to them for the boy. This meeting of chosen friends is held with the Holy Book in their midst.

(c) The convenience of both parties is consulted, and a day is fixed for performing the ceremony of marriage.

(d) After a prayer the bridegroom (with no particular signs on him except a garland) goes with a party of friends and relatives to the house of the bride, where a similar party is ready to receive them. The time chosen is usually in the evening. Both parties approach each other from opposite directions, singing hymns of welcome and joy. When they are face to face, someone of them steps forward and offers prayer. Then they embrace each other and separate.

In the morning a congregation is formed with the Holy Book in their midst. Both parties sit together and listen to the music of *Asa-di-Var*. When the music is over, the bride and the bridegroom are seated facing the Book, the bride being on the left of the bridegroom.

Anybody in the congregation can perform the marriage ceremony. The officiating person asks the couple and their parents to stand up, and, leading them in prayer, asks God's blessing upon

the occasion. Then he addresses the couple individually, pointing out to them their duties towards each other, towards their families, their society and their religion. The ideal placed before them is that they should become one in spirit:

“ They are not wife and husband who only sit together;

Rather are they wife and husband who have one spirit in two bodies” (*Suhi ki Var*, III).

They are asked to mould their conjugal relations on the model laid down in the Epithalamium of Guru Ram Das, which is a part of the marriage service. In it the Guru mentions four steps in the development of a life of love: Fear, Love, Restraint and Harmony.

When the parties bow their heads in acknowledgment, the scarf of the bridegroom is given into the hand of the bride, and they stand up and listen to the strains of music:

“ I attach myself to thee.

Leaving all my relations as bitter, bitter,
I come to cling to thee”

(*Var Ramkali*, V).

Then one by one the four stanzas of Guru Ramdas's Epithalamium,* called *Lāvān*, are read out of the Holy Book, and after each reading

*See Appendix II.

the couple go round the Book, the bridegroom leading the bride, accompanied by the music of the same stanza sung by the musicians. Each time they return to their places and bow their heads. Then the musicians sing the six stanzas of the *Anand*,* and the person who is performing the marriage offers prayers of thanksgiving in which the whole congregation joins. After that *Karah Prasad* is distributed and the ceremony comes to an end with the garlanding of the couple.

(e) The same ceremony is performed at the remarriage of a widow or widower.

(f) Both parties in marriage are expected to be baptized.

(g) Poligamy is discouraged, and Sikhs are enjoined to be faithful to one wife.

DEATH CEREMONY

(a) At the death-bed of a Sikh, the relations and friends console themselves and the departing soul by reading *Sukhmani*, or the Psalm of Peace.

(b) When death occurs, no loud lamentations are allowed. Instead, the Sikhs exclaim *Wahiguru, Wahiguru!* (Wonderful Lord!)

(c) All dead bodies, whether those of children or of grown-up people, are cremated. Where

*See Appendix I.

cremation is not possible, it is permissible to throw the dead body into the sea or river.

(d) The dead body is washed and clothed (complete with all the five symbols) before it is taken out on a bier to the cremation-ground. The procession starts after a prayer and sings suitable hymns on the way. At the cremation-ground the body is placed on the pyre and the nearest relations light the fire. When the fire is fully ablaze, someone reads *Sohila* and offers prayers for the benefit of the dead. Then the people come away, and leave the relations of the dead at their door, where they are thanked and dismissed.

The bereaved family, for the comfort of their own souls as well as for the peace of the departed, start a reading of the Holy Book, which may be at their own house or at a neighbouring *Gurdwara*. Friends and relations take part in it, and after ten days they again come together when the reading is finished. The usual prayer is offered and *Karah Prasad* distributed.

(e) The charred bones of the dead together with the ashes are taken from the cremation-ground and thrown into the nearest river.

(f) It is forbidden to erect monuments *over the remains* of the dead, although monuments *in their honour* at any other place would be quite permissible.

3. DISCIPLINE OF SERVICE

Service is an essential part of a Sikh's duty. It is the practical expression of love. Those whom one is to serve must be loved. The caste system and its accompanying evil of untouchability have therefore no place in a religion of service. Service recognizes no barriers of religion, caste or race. It must be offered to all. It should not take the fixed forms of sectarian charity, but should be freely varied according to the reasonable needs of those whom we want to help.

Gurdwaras are the laboratories for teaching the practice of service, for which the real field is the world abroad. The service in Gurdwaras takes the form of sweeping the floor, cleaning utensils, fetching water and pulling the *pankha* or fan. But the most important institution in this connection is the Guru's Free Kitchen.

FREE KITCHEN

(a) The institution of *Guru ka Langar*, or Free Kitchen, is as old as Sikhism. It was started by Guru Nanak for the purpose of teaching service, spreading equality and removing untouchability and other prejudices born of the caste system.

(b) In a way, the kitchen in every Sikh's house is *Guru ka Langar*, as he is enjoined to

share his food with others. He is also expected to take part in the running of the common free kitchens opened at Gurdwaras. He may contribute provisions, pay for the expenses, or personally take a hand in cleaning utensils, fetching water or fuel, or in the cooking and distribution of food.

(c) Non-Sikhs are also freely allowed to help in the maintenance of the kitchen.

(d) No invidious distinction is to be made between man and man, between Sikh and non-Sikh, between caste-man and outcaste, when making seating arrangements or serving food in the Guru's kitchen.

IN CORPORATE LIFE

Discipline of Sacrament—Discipline of Organization—Disciplinary Action

After a Sikh has learnt service in a Gurdwara, he has to practise it in the world abroad. For this organization is necessary. This organization is called the *Panth*. Every Sikh is expected to take part in the corporate life of his community and to do his duty to the *Panth*.

1. DISCIPLINE OF SACRAMENT

The first step in joining this organization is to receive initiation through *Amrit*.

AMRIT OR SIKH BAPTISM

(a) The *Amrit* ceremony is held in some place which must not be a thoroughfare.

(b) The Holy Granth is opened. One regular Sikh is required to sit before it, and five others to conduct the ceremony. These are called *Panj Pyaras*, or the Five Beloved Ones. Women are also eligible for this work. All these Sikhs should have washed themselves and their hair, and should be wearing all the five symbols called the Five K's: *Kesh* (long hair), *Kangha* (comb), *Kachh* (knickers), *Kara* (iron bracelet) and *Kirpan* (sword).

(c) None of the Five should be blind, half-blind, or a cripple. None should have committed a breach of the baptismal vows. All should be fit in every way—strong, healthy, cheerful and tidy.

(d) The Sikh baptism is open to men and women of all countries, of whatever race, creed or caste. The recipients must not be too young. They should have washed themselves, including their hair, and should have the five K's on them, and no mark or symbol of any other religion. They should not have their heads bare or covered with a cap or hat. No earrings are allowed. The wearing of other ornaments is also discouraged. All should stand reverently with folded hands.

(e) If any one has to be rebaptized on account of some breach of the rules, he is taken apart by the Five and some penalty is imposed upon him, after which he is allowed to rejoin the rest.

(f) The party is then addressed by one of the Five who explains the principles of Sikhism, including belief in the oneness of God, His love as the only way of salvation, practice of the Name and the Guru's Word as the means of awakening that love in one's heart, and service of man with selflessness and sacrifice.

(g) They are asked whether they accept these principles. When they give their assent, one of the Five offers prayer for the preparation of *Amrit*, and the person sitting before the Book reads out a passage from it. Then all the Five begin to prepare the *Amrit*, or the water of immortality.

(h) They place an iron vessel on a pedestal and sitting round it put water and a suitable quantity of sweets (*patashas*) into it. They sit in what is called the 'heroic attitude,' with the left knee up and the right knee on the ground.

(i) They recite the following five pieces in a loud voice:

The *Japji*, *Jāp*, 10 *Swayyas*, *Chaupai*
from *Rahiras* and 6 stanzas from the *Anand*.*

*See Appendix I.

The reciter, looking intently into the water and placing his left hand on the edge of the vessel, continues stirring the water with a double-edged sword which he holds in his right hand. The rest keep both their hands on the vessel, and their eyes fixed on the water.

(j) When the recitation is over, all Five stand up with the vessel in their hands, and one of them offers prayer. The *Amrit* is now ready.

(k) Each candidate is called up and seats himself in the 'heroic attitude' described above. He is asked to make a cup of his hands, by placing his right hand over his left, and to receive five handfuls of the *Amrit* one after another. As each handful is drunk by the recipient, the giver of the *Amrit* shouts "*Wāhiguruḥ kā Khālsā, Wāhiguruḥ kī Fateh!*" and the recipient repeats it after him. Then his eyes and his hair are each touched with the *Amrit* five times; each time the recipient is asked to repeat the above cry after the giver of the *Amrit*. What is left is drunk off turn by turn by all the candidates sipping direct from the vessel. Thus they become "Brothers of the Golden Cup."

(l) Then the Five initiators with one voice utter the following invocation to God, given in the beginning of the *Japji*, and the initiated persons repeat it after them:

“By the grace of the one Supreme Being, of the True Name, the Creator, devoid of fear and enmity, immortal, unborn, self-existent and the Enlightener !”

This is done five times.

(m) One of the Five then administers the *Raht*, or the vows of Sikh discipline.

He tells them that they are to consider themselves as children of the same parents. Their father is Guru Gobind Singh and their mother Mātā Sahib Kaur. Their home is Keshgarh. All the differences based on their previous religions, castes and occupations are done away with, and they begin afresh as the ‘purified ones,’ as the Khalsa who believes in one God and in no gods or goddesses, who conducts himself by the teachings of the Ten Gurus and puts his faith in no other guide or book. They are to offer the daily prayers* regularly, pay tithes, and never to part with any of the five K’s. They are to abstain from the following four main taboos, called *Kurahts*:—

(1) Removal of hair; (2) Eating meat cut† and prepared in Mohammedan fashion; (3) Adultery; and (4) Using tobacco in any form.

*Given in the beginning of this chapter.

†The Sikhs eat *Jhatka* meat, i.e., the flesh of a bird or animal that has been killed with one stroke and not by the slow process favoured by Mohammedans.

If a Sikh commits any of these breaches of discipline he becomes a '*patit*' (apostate) and has to have himself rebaptized.

The following are some of the minor taboos, called '*tankhahs*':

(1) Entering into brotherhood with any of the recalcitrant Sikhs, like the Minas, Masands, Dhir-malias and Ram Raias, or with those who, having once accepted Sikhism, take to shaving, smoking or committing infanticide.

(2) Dining at the same dish with a person unbaptized or an apostate.

(3) Dyeing or picking out any white hairs.

(4) Receiving money in return for a daughter's hand in marriage. (The same taboo now extends to a bribe received on a son's marriage.)

(5) Using any narcotic drug or intoxicant (opium, wine, poppy, hemp, cocaine, etc.).

(6) Performing any ceremony which violates any Sikh principles.

(7) The breaking of any vow taken at baptism.

(n) After this one of the Five offers prayer, and the person sitting before the Book reads out a passage.

(o) Those who are new to Sikhism must be renamed. The new name is given to them in the

manner already described under the *Naming* ceremony (p. 106).

(p) At the end *Karah Prasad* is distributed. All the newly initiated Sikhs eat *Karah Prasad* out of the same vessel.

2. DISCIPLINE OF ORGANIZATION

(a) *Guru Panth*.—All baptized* Sikhs acting together with the sense of the Guru in them constitute the *Guru Panth*.

(b) *Guru Sangat*.—Wherever there are at least five regular Sikhs, they can form a *Sangat*. When they act in a representative capacity with the sense of the Guru in them, they constitute a *Guru Sangat*.† The presence of *Guru Granth Sahib* in their midst is essential.

(c) *Panthic Meeting*.—Such units meeting as a whole (as was the custom in the early days when the numbers were small) or through their accredited representatives (as is done nowadays) form a meeting of the *Panth*.

(d) *Gurmattas*.—All decisions affecting the whole community are made by such a *Panthic* meeting. These decisions are called *Gurmattas*.

*The Guruship was given to the *Khalsa*, and the term *Khalsa* applies to baptized Sikhs alone.

†When Sikhs gather in an ordinary way—not in a representative capacity to act as a unit of the *Guru Panth*, but only as a religious gathering—they are called a *Sādh Sangat*. Such a meeting is open to all, non-Sikhs as well as Sikhs.

(e) For a *Gurmatta* only those subjects can be taken up which are calculated to clarify and support the fundamental principles of Sikhism, such as safeguarding the position of the Gurus and the Holy Granth, purity of the ritual and the Panthic organization. On other questions, such as political, social or educational matters, only a *matta* or resolution can be passed, which is not as sacred and inviolable as a *Gurmatta*.

(f) The appeal against the decisions of local *Sangats* lies with the Akal Takht, but the decisions of the Panth are inviolable and are binding on all Sikhs.

(g) These decisions are conveyed to the *Sangats* in the form of *Hukamnamas*, or orders issued from the Akal Takht.

(h) Ordinary cases of reference about the ritual are disposed of by the Akal Takht and the other three Takhts. These decisions are also issued in the form of *Hukamnamas*.

3. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

(a) When a Sikh commits a breach of *Raht*, or the rules of Sikh discipline as given under different taboos, he is expected to present himself before the nearest *Sangat* and confess his fault. At this the *Sangat* appoints a commission of Five Beloved Ones to try him. When the names of the commission are proposed the creden-

tials of each one are challenged, and if nothing is found against any of them they are confirmed. They hear the offender's confession in detail, and ascertaining the magnitude of his fault, suggest some punishment, which usually is of a light nature, such as fetching water or wiping the shoes of the congregation. If the fault proved comes under the four major taboos, then in addition to being heavily punished, the guilty person is asked to receive baptism afresh.

(b) The *Sangat* is expected not to be vindictive in awarding punishment, so that the person found guilty may not have any rancour left in his mind. After all, the punishment comes not from an enemy but from the Beloved Ones who impersonate the great Guru who was all love. The punishment thus awarded is received good-humouredly as a *tankhah*, or salary, and no contempt or humiliation is involved in it.

(c) At the end there is a prayer in which all stand up with the penitent and pray for the forgiveness of their own sins as well as his.

CHAPTER IX

THE SIKH PRAYER

Ode to the Deity by the Tenth King*

Having first remembered God the Almighty, think of Guru Nanak;

Then of Angad Guru, and Amar Das, and Ram Das; may they help us!

Remember Arjun, Hargobind and the holy Har Rai.

Let us think of the holy Harikrishan, whose sight dispels all sorrow.

Let us remember Tegh Bahadur, and the nine treasures† shall come hastening to our homes.

*This heading belongs to the first six verses only, which are taken from the beginning of *Bhagauti-ki-Var*, by Guru Gobind Singh, who is called the Tenth King.

The piece is in praise of Bhagauti, or God, and not the goddess Durga, as some suppose. In Guru Granth Sahib, wherever the word Bhaguati occurs, it means God or His worshipper. In this *Var* Bhagauti is described as the Creator of *Durga*, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Krishna, etc. It could not be Durga, therefore. In the story of Chandi the goddess is not once named Bhagauti. In the writings of Guru Gobind Singh, the word *Bhagauti* means the sword or God, and God is often addressed as the sword. Guru Gobind Singh is very clear against the worship of gods and goddesses. He says, 'I do not worship any creature. I worship only the Creator.'—*Hazāre-de-Shabd*.

'I do not propitiate Ganesh;
I never meditate on Krishan or Vishan;
I have heard of them, but I know them not;
It is only God's feet I love.'—*Krishna Avatār*.

†Untold wealth or prosperity. In the Hindu Scriptures these treasures are specifically mentioned.

May they all assist us everywhere !

May the Tenth King, the holy Guru Gobind Singh, the lord of hosts and protector of the faith, assist us everywhere !

Turn your thoughts, O Khalsa, to the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, and call on God !
(Wonderful Lord !)*

The five Beloved Ones,† the Master's four sons,‡ the forty Saved Ones,§ and other righteous,

*The parenthetical exclamations of *Wāhiguru*, or Wonderful Lord, are responses made by the audience in moments of religious fervour, when each item of past experience is brought home to them, when the examples of their brave ancestors are recounted one by one before them.

†*The Five Beloved Ones*—Bhais Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, Himmat Singh, Muhkam Singh and Sahib Singh, who had offered themselves when Guru Gobind Singh, in a big meeting at Keshgarh, had demanded their lives. They were the first to be baptized as the Khalsa. The Guru himself received baptism from them.

‡Guru Gobind Singh's children: Babas Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, who were killed in the battle of Chamkaur ; and Babas Fatch Singh and Zorawar Singh, who were put to death by the order of the Governor of Sirhind. They were buried alive under the foundations of a wall.

§When Guru Gobind Singh was besieged in Anandpur in 1701, and the provisions ran short, forty of his Sikhs deserted him and went away to their villages. When they reached home their women made them repent, and they came back, under the leadership of a woman named Mai Bhago. The Guru by that time had left Anandpur and was at Muktsar. These forty came without his knowledge, and fought with his enemies until all of them were killed. A dying Sikh was visited by the Guru, who at his request not only forgave the deserters, but honoured them with the title of *Saved Ones*.

steadfast* and long-suffering† souls: think of their deeds and call on God!—

(Wonderful Lord !)

Those men and women‡ who, keeping the Name in their hearts, shared their earnings§ with others; who plied the sword and practised charity; who saw others' faults, but overlooked them: think of their deeds and call on God !

(Wonderful Lord !)

**Steadfast*, like Bhai Bhikhari, of Gujrat, who stoically took pleasure and pain alike, and whose mind remained fixed in God's love during the marriage of his son as well as at the son's death, which occurred soon after.

†*Long-suffering*, like Bhai Manjh, whose patient service in the days of Guru Arjun is known to every Sikh. Bibi Bhani and Bhai Jetha's service was also of the same kind. In the time of Guru Arjun the conscientious daughter of Patti's magistrate did her duty by her leper husband, even under most trying circumstances.

‡These are instances of goodness practised in the ordinary circumstances of life. In the next two lines the examples are of a more heroic character.

§*Shared their earnings*, like Bhai Taru Singh. He lived in Poola, a village in the Manjha tract. He was a young man of twenty-five, very pious and devoted to the service of the Sikhs, whom the iron rule of the Governor of Lahore had driven into the forest. Bhai Taru Singh cultivated his fields, and whatever was produced he offered to his exiled brethren. This was considered treason. Bhai Taru Singh was betrayed by one Har Bhagat, a follower of Akil Das Niranjani, of Jandiala. He was brought to Lahore (A. D. 1750) and was asked to embrace Islam or die on the wheel. He accepted the latter rather than allow his hair to be shaved. He suffered his torturers to cut off his scalp.

Those who for their religion allowed themselves to be cut up limb by limb,* had their scalps scraped off, were broken on the wheel,† were sawn‡ or flayed alive: think of their sweet resignation and call on God!

(Wonderful Lord!)

Those who, to purge the temples of long-standing evils, suffered themselves to be ruth-

**Cut up limb by limb*, like Bhai Mani Singh. He was the most learned man of his time. He had received baptism from the Tenth Guru himself. When quarrels arose among the Sikhs at Amritsar, he was sent by the widow of Guru Gobind Singh to take charge of the Golden Temple. At that time persecution of the Sikhs was going on, and in the neighbourhood of Amritsar soldiers were picketed to prevent the Sikhs from visiting the temple. Bhai Mani Singh, who was held in great esteem by the Mohammedan officials of Amritsar, applied for leave to hold the Diwali fair in Amritsar. The matter was referred to Lahore, and the permission was granted, on the condition that Bhai Mani Singh should pay Rs. 5000 after the fair. Bhai Mani Singh invited Sikhs from far and near in 1738. But the Governor of Lahore sent a force to Amritsar, under the pretext of keeping order during the fair, but really to fall upon the approaching Sikhs and destroy them. The Sikhs were apprised of the trap and the fair was not held. Bhai Mani Singh was arrested for not paying the fixed sum, and was condemned to death. He was offered the usual alternative of Islam, but he stoutly refused to barter his religion. His body was cut to pieces limb by limb.

†*Broken on the wheel*. A Sikh boy, named Shahbaz Singh, used to read in a Mohammedan school under a Qazi, who wanted to convert him. The boy refused. Then they tried to put pressure on him through his father, named Bhai Subeg Singh; but he too refused. Both father and son were broken on the wheel. This was in 1743.

‡Bhai Mati Das was sawn at the time when Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred (1675).

lessly beaten* or imprisoned, to be shot, cut up, or burnt alive with kerosene oil, but did not make any resistance or utter even a sigh of complaint: think of their patient faith and call on God!

(Wonderful Lord!)

Think of all the different temples, thrones† of religious authority, and other places hallowed by the touch of the Guru's feet, and call on God!

(Wonderful Lord!)

Now the whole Khalsa‡ offers his prayer.

Let the whole Khalsa bring to his mind the Name§ of the wonderful Lord:

And as he thinks of Him, may he feel completely blessed.

**Ruthlessly beaten*, as at *Guru-ka-Bagh*, in 1922. To be shot, etc., like Bhai Lachhman Singh, Dalip Singh, and about 130 other Sikhs who were martyred at Nankana Sahib in the year 1921.

†These are four temples, whence religious edicts, called *Hukammanas*, are issued to the Sikh community, whenever the interpretation of a doctrine or rule of conduct is in question. They are called *Takhts*, most important of which is the Akal Takht.

‡*The whole Khalsa*. From this line up to line 25 the prayer is addressed on behalf of the whole community, and the blessings invited are general, concerning the Panth as a whole. From line 26 onwards the prayer is from a particular congregation, and the gifts demanded are of immediate concern.

§The word *Name* means the manifestation of God or His attributes, His bounties, His mercies, from which we know Him.

May God's protection and grace extend to all the bodies of the Khalsa wherever* they are.

May the Lord's glory be fulfilled, and His dispensation prevail.

May victory attend our Charity and our Arms.†

May God's sword help us.

May the Khalsa always triumph.

May the Sikh choirs,‡ banners, mansions§ abide for ever and ever.

The kingdom of justice come !

May the Sikhs be united in love.

May the hearts of the Sikhs be humble, but their wisdom exalted—their wisdom in the keeping of the Lord. O Khalsa, say the Lord is wonderful. (Wonderful Lord !)

*This reminds us of the times when the Sikhs were persecuted and could not reside in towns or cities. They moved about in batches in deserts and forests, and they used to think of the different scattered associations of the Sikhs and to bless them wherever they were.

†The Sikhs were to follow the stern profession of punishing the wrong-doers, but they never lost sight of the accompanying virtue of charity. The sword and the kettle (in which they cooked food for distribution) always went together.

‡The *choirs* are the singing parties that go round the temple in Amritsar at night, singing hymns to beautiful old tunes. This practice comes down from the time of Guru Hargobind (1595-1645).

§*Mansions*, or *bungahs*, are the stately rest-houses built round the Golden Temple by different Sikh Chiefs or heads of Missals, for the accommodation of pilgrims.

O true King! O loved Father! in these ambrosial hours of the morn we have sung Thy sweet hymns, heard Thy life-giving Word, and have discoursed on Thy manifold blessings. May these things find a loving place in our hearts and serve to draw our souls towards Thee.

Save us, O Father, from lust, wrath, greed, worldly attachment and pride; and keep us always attached to Thy feet.

Grant to Thy Sikhs the gift of Sikhism, the gift of Thy Name, the gift of faith, the gift of confidence in Thee, and the gift of reading and understanding Thy holy Word.

O kind Father, loving Father, through Thy mercy we have spent the night in peace and happiness; may Thy grace extend to our labours of the day too, so that we may, according to Thy will, do what is right.

Give us light, give us understanding, so that we may know what pleaseth Thee.

We offer this prayer in Thy presence, O wonderful Lord:

Forgive us our sins. Help us to keep ourselves pure.

Bring us into the fellowship of only those men of love, in whose company we may remember Thy Name.

Through Nanak may Thy Name for ever be
on the increase;

And may *all* men prosper by Thy grace.

*Hail Khalsa of the wonderful Lord, who is
always victorious!*

NOTE ON SIKH PRAYER

The Sikh's conception of God is personal. He moves in Him like a fish in the water, and lives with Him like a wife with her husband. He is in constant communion with Him through prayer. Therefore prayer is much used in Sikhism. The Scriptures consist chiefly of prayers. No ceremony, whether religious or secular, is complete without prayer; nay, most of the ceremonies and rituals contain nothing else. Before going on a journey, or opening a shop, or occupying a new house, the Sikh opens the Holy Book and asks God's blessing. Often, if time and his means permit, he also arranges for the singing of hymns of thanksgiving. But he will never omit a short prayer,* which even the poorest can afford.

No priest is required to address it. Anybody, man or woman, old or young, can lead in prayer. Even a boy or a girl may be seen conducting the morning or evening service, and

* 'If we want to do anything, let us address God about it.'—*Var Sri Rag*, IV.

leading in prayer a big congregation consisting of the most learned and advanced in age. This is purposely encouraged, so that everybody may learn to shoulder his or her responsibilities without the help of a priestly class.

The prayer varies in size and content. Sometimes only a few words will do. A man starting on horseback, with one foot in the stirrup, may mutter to himself: 'O Lord of the Plume, help Thy humble servant.' Or a few lines may be repeated from the Scriptures by way of saying grace before or after dinner.

In these pages, however, we have introduced the reader to the Standard Prayer of the Sikhs.

As a piece of composition it is one of the rarities of literature. It is not the work of any one man or any one time. The whole Sikh nation has been at work on it for centuries. The custom of offering prayers must have begun with the rise of Sikhism; but by the time of Guru Hargobind, the fifth successor of Guru Nanak, when places of worship had been organized and a definite book of faith had been installed in them, it became an established rule to gather together for the purpose of praying in congregations. According to the *Dabistan-i-Mazahab*, when anybody wanted a gift from heaven, he would come to such an assembly of Sikhs and ask them to pray for him. Even the Guru asked his Sikhs to intercede for him. Familiar expres-

sions of prayer began to accumulate, until by the time of Guru Gobind Singh a definite form was given to it.

As it now stands, it can be divided into three parts:

(1) Six lines of verse by Guru Gobind Singh, invoking God and the first nine Gurus.

(2) From line 7 to line 25, rhythmic prose, composed by generations of Sikhs, as the events of their history went on leaving their impression on their minds. The community even now has not abdicated its right of moulding this part of the prayer. It can refer in any suitable terms to the present-day difficulties and sorrows of the Panth, e.g., in connection with the wearing of *kirpans* and the reforming of temples.

(3) The prayer proper, the composition of which, excepting a few words here and there, depends entirely upon the man who is praying.

The first seven and the last two lines can in no case be altered or omitted. In all other lines changes can be made. We can shorten, omit, add to, or do anything with them.

Though everybody is required to be able to lead in prayer, everybody cannot be expected to be original and to express himself in an assembly in a correct, concise and moving manner. Therefore it is provided that the man offering the

prayer should begin with a recitation, and become more and more free as he proceeds. After the compositions of the Guru and the community, he has a chance to try his free hand in expressing his inmost thoughts or the conjectured ideas of the whole congregation. It is so helpful, so educative.

The prayer is communal, not only in the composition of its language, but also in the nature of its subject-matter. The Sikh, while offering it, is made to realize that he is a part of the corporate body, called the Panth or the Khalsa, whose past and present history is recounted with all its sacrifices, successes, glories and needs. In order to understand why so much of the prayer is taken up with historical details, we must consider the meaning of the Sikh prayer.

The Gurus were very careful when imparting their teaching. They did not deliver lectures or write books and leave them to be understood by their Sikhs. They took as much care in the preparation of the disciple as of the lesson itself. They wanted to see that what they gave was capable of being digested and assimilated by him. Therefore the teaching was in the disciple's own vernacular, and was given in the form of a song or discourse. Further, it was not delivered at once or in one life. The Gurus took in

hand the training of a nation, and each one of them at a time gave as much instruction as was needful, passing it on to the next Guru when the work of one generation was complete. In this way the whole course of training extended over ten generations.

In other ways, too, the Gurus took care to see that no effect of their teaching was lost upon the disciple. The different morning and evening services were fixed according to the mood or atmosphere of the time. The philosophical *Japji* (or the Meditations of Guru Nanak) is to be read in the morning, and the *Kirtan Sohila*, which breathes the spirit of calmness and resignation, is fixed for the bed-time. If we look into the nature of the compositions, we shall find that the difference is just suited to the difference between our inward mood of the morning and that of the evening. The passions, which are dominant in the evening, in the morning leave the field to the contemplative part of the soul. The mind has been tranquillized by calm sleep and is nearer heaven. It is quite fresh and clear, and can dwell on the difficult problems of human life discussed in the *Japji*. Our whole being, irritated and overstrung by the nervous excitement of the day, reaches by night time the culminating point of its human vitality; and as we sit in bed, preparing for sleep, we can no longer bear the strain of hard thinking. There-

fore a short musical piece is all that has to be recited before we give ourselves up to sleep. The thoughts contained in the poem are further made easy by being woven in the form of imaginative figures. Our imagination just at that time is very active, so the abstract ideas are presented to us clothed in images. See how the difficult idea of the oneness of God amidst the diversity of His manifestations is made clear to us by being compared to the oneness of the sun in spite of the divisions of time and season. Look at the figure of the proud man lamed by the thorn of pride. Look at the figure of the bride approaching the door of her spouse, while oil is being poured on it by the friends of the family. It is really the human soul yearning to meet God after waiting day and night to receive a call from Him. Again, how beautifully the diversity of God's presence, diffused in the face of Nature, is presented in the form of the stars and planets moving round the altar of God to perform an *arti*! We have given instances enough to show what pains the Gurus have taken to suit their teaching to the mood of the disciple's mind.

In the case of the prayer, too, the same care has been taken. The Sikh has to bring himself into a prayerful mood before he addresses himself to his God. When we actually pray, we stand face to face with God. But before we enter into the innermost tabernacle of God and

reach that consummation, we have much to traverse the ground of moral struggle and spiritual preparation. We have to realize what the communion with God has meant for those who have loved Him; what sufferings and sacrifices they had to undergo to be able to see His face. We have to refresh ourselves with the sweet faith of those immortals, and fortify our minds with their patient strength and resignation.

Prayer does not mean a mere psychological union with God and an undisturbed rest in Him. It means an active yearning of the soul to feel one with God, who is always active, who is always patient, who is always hopeful.) Prayer should, therefore, refresh our spirit and make us ready to do God's will. This can be done, if we first commune ourselves with God revealed in history, and reverently watch the organic growth of divinity in mankind. To do this we have to feel ourselves a part of that congregation of God-like beings who represent the best in man. We should steep ourselves in the association of those in whose company we feel the presence of God (cf. line 33).

The Sikh prayer was composed from this point of view. It begins with an invocation to God, and then different souls are invoked in the order of precedence. The highest ideal of godliness, according to the Sikhs, was realized in Guru Nanak and his nine successors. Therefore

they are mentioned next. Then the five Loved Ones, who for their sacrifice were invested with collective guruship by the last Guru; then the Guru's sons, who bravely met martyrdom and, though young, kept up the brave tradition of their forefathers; then other great men and women, who wore arms and practised charity, and in the face of unspeakable suffering kept their faith unsullied. This part of the prayer is the work of the whole community, past and present, and is most vigorous in style and language.

How many hearts in these long centuries it has soothed in affliction and braved in difficulties ! It bears the stamp of all that is best and most moving in Sikhism. It is the crystallisation of the Sikh nation's history. It is a living monument of its greatness, which generation after generation of the Sikhs will repeat to themselves to keep alive the old fire in their midst.

After bringing before their vision the mighty deeds of their forefathers, they think of their present condition, their temples, their associations, their choirs moving nightly round the Golden Temple, their banners, their mansions, which remind them of their past glory, and call blessings on them.

Then begins the prayer proper. Here one is quite free to express oneself. In the last line but one the Sikh prays for the advancement of his

religion to promote the knowledge of God among men; but this missionary work is to be carried on with due regard to others' rights and sentiments, for in the next line he prays for the good of everybody, without distinction of caste or creed.

This prayer has been handed down from the days of the conflict with the Mohammedans, in which the Sikhs suffered martyrdoms that are enumerated in it. Yet nowhere is there shown any sign of bitterness or revenge. There is no reproach or curse on the enemy; only the sufferings are enumerated, which are taken as sacrifices made by the community.

APPENDIX I

THE ANAND

(Guru Amardas's *Song of Joy*)

I

O joy! my mother, I've found my Lord and Guide.
I meet Him at my ease, with jubilations ringing in my heart,
As if the spirits of song and beves of fairies had come to
hymn my joy.
All join in singing of Him, ye who love the Lord in your
hearts.
How glad I feel that I have found my Lord and Guide!

II

O my heart, be always with the Lord.
If you abide with Him, He will beguile your sorrows,
And working on your side will order all your affairs for you.
He can do all things; why should you forget such a Lord?
Nay, my soul! be always with Him.

III

O my true Master, what is there that cannot be had in Thy
house of grace?
Thy house has everything; but he alone receives to whom
Thou choosest to give.
Such a man will always praise Thee and bear Thy Name in
his heart.
With the Name filling his heart he will hear the songs of joy
in abundance.
O my true Master, what is there not in Thy house of grace?

IV

The true Name is my support.
It is my food and drink; by it my hunger of every kind is
removed.

By saturating my mind, it has satisfied all my longings and given me peace and happiness.

Such are the excellences of my Lord the Guide, at whose feet

I wish to pour out my life for ever and ever.

You too should love His Word, O my brothers in spirit!

It is the support of my life.

V

The manifold strains of its music resound in the heart that is blest;

Aye, blessed is the heart that, touched by Grace, vibrates with the Name.

It subdues in us the five deadly passions and takes the sting out of Death.

It is a gift from heaven, and only the gifted ones are led to love it.

They alone enjoy its peace, when its strains of ecstasy resound in their hearts.

* * * * *

XL

Listen to my song of joy, O fortunate friends! my wishes are all fulfilled:

I have found my Supreme Lord, and all my sorrows are at an end.

By listening to the Word Divine I have put away every trouble and affliction of the body and mind.

My friends and holy companions are also feeling blest as they hear the Word from the perfect Master.

As they listen to it, or recite it, they feel sanctified by the Presence revealed everywhere.

They attach themselves to the Enlightener, who rings unbeaten bars of music on their souls.

APPENDIX II

GURU RAMDAS'S EPITHALAMIUM

I

By this first round you offer yourselves as a sacrifice to the all-pervading Deity who inaugurates you in the duties of home.

Accept the Guru's Word as your religion in place of Brahma and his Veda; and it will help you to shun the ways of sin.

Let this be your law of life—to meditate on the Name of God which is the theme of all scriptures.

You should contemplate the Guru as the perfect exemplar, who leads you out of sin.

Fortunate are those who have been made serenely happy by a yearning springing up in their hearts for the Heavenly Bridegroom.

This is the first round, with which the marriage ceremony begins.

II

By the second round I express my gratefulness to God, who has introduced me to the true and perfect Enlightener.

The mind, washed of the dirt of egoism, imbibes the Fear that dispels all fear.

It is a holy Fear, got by singing God's praises and beholding Him face to face,

As the soul of the universe diffused everywhere and filling every place.

Within me and without me is the one God my Master, whose jubilation I sing in the company of His saints.

Thus goes the second round, with the strains of ecstasy ringing in my ears.

III

As I circle round the third time in admiration of the Beloved,
Love is produced in the heart which withdraws itself from
other affections.

Brought together by His saints I congratulate myself on my
union with Him.

I have met the Pure One, I sing His praises and utter His
Word.

In the company of holy men, got by rare chance, I tell tales
of the Ineffable.

My heart resounds with the Name of God, whose worship is
the consummation of my destiny.

In this way, with the third round, dispassionate Love is born
in the heart.

IV

At the fourth sacrificial turning, love reaches the stage of
perfect Harmony, with the consciousness of complete
union with the Lord.

Through the mediation of the Guru the union brought about
is natural, and tastes sweet to the body and soul.

It so pleased my Lord that He should taste sweet to me, and
I should remain absorbed in Him.

I have obtained my Spouse who is after my heart, and I
congratulate myself.

God Himself arranged this marriage, and the Bride's heart
rejoices in His Name.

With the fourth round God is obtained as the Imperishable
Husband.

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